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The August number of THE SMART SET *will contain:*
"Sylvia's Husband," by Mrs. Burton Harrison

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Among the other contributors to the August number will be: Gertrude Atherton, Brander Matthews, Seumas MacManus, Maäison Cawein, Elia W. Peattie and Arthur Stringer

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THE METEMPSYCHOSIS OF THE OGDENS

By Edward S. Van Zile

"If this were played upon the stage now, I could condemn it as an impossible fiction."—SHAKESPEARE.

"I DON'T wish to be unjust or tyrannical, my child, but——"

"But you are both, father," cried Gwendolen Ogden, her dark eyes flashing fire as they noted the stubborn, relentless expression of Richard Ogden's heavy, immobile, clean-shaven face.

"I must say, Gwendolen, that as an only child—" began Mr Ogden anew.

"But you're my only father," put in Gwendolen, argumentatively.

"Sit down, girl," ordered Ogden, peremptorily. "We must talk this out, once for all. I can't have you striding up and down my library with your hands behind your back. It's distinctly unfeminine, Gwendolen."

The tall, handsome, neatly-tailored young woman threw herself into an arm-chair, and turned a defiant face toward her frowning parent, who had withdrawn his chair from the desk at which he had been writing letters before his daughter had abruptly interrupted his privacy.

"If your mother had lived—" Ogden began again, on a new tack.

"But mama didn't live," remarked the girl bluntly. "And I don't see, father what that has to do with the matter at all. I've got to do as other girls in my position do. You're a rich man, father; you've told me so yourself."

"It's not altogether a question of money, Gwendolen," said her father, in an explanatory way, toying rather nervously with a quaint, Oriental paper-weight on his desk; "it's—well, it's a whole lot of things. I disapprove of your squandering thousands of dollars every year on nonsense. Do you know what your luncheon for the débutantes cost? It was shocking, my dear, actually shocking. Your horses, dresses, traveling expenses, pocket-money and 'extras'—whatever they may be—amount to an enormous sum, every quarter. I make you a handsome allowance, and what do you do with it? You throw it away on silly, useless things, just because fashion decrees that you must live in a certain way. Have you no independence, no originality, Gwen? If I were in your place, I'd break away from the conventional ties that bind me to an aimless and selfish mode of life, and do something worth while in this world. What would you think of your father, my child, if I should abandon my affairs to become a club lounger and golf fiend?"

Gwendolen's clear-cut, changeable face—she resembled her mother in coloring, feature and bearing—displayed the mingled astonishment and annoyance that her father's words had aroused in her youthful soul.

"Would you like to have me learn type-writing, father?" she asked, rather flippantly.

"That's not fair, Gwendolen," commented her father, clutching tightly

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the curiously carved paper-weight, in his effort to restrain his rising anger. "But I should like to have you display more common-sense in your general mode of life. Teas, calls, cotillons, house-parties, rides, drives, dinners, and—always and forever—flirtations; these make up your existence, my child. Do you consider it a noble career? And now you come to me for more money—more money for what?—for more nonsense, of course. You can't blame me, Gwendolen, for feeling annoyed."

There had come a blush into the girl's cheeks, and her dark eyes glowed, dangerously.

"And do you lead a noble career, father?" she cried, forced to make a sacrifice of filial reverence in an effort at self-defense. "Is the formation of a new trust a praiseworthy achievement? Is the increase of your fortune by another million anything to your credit? What I spend of your income is a bagatelle. You and I, squandering money day and night, couldn't check the increase of your wealth, father. But you devote all your time, not to the best and highest use of your income, but to the quickest and cleverest increase of your capital. If my career is silly, as you say it is, father, at least it is based upon the reasonable proposition that it is impossible to get too much pleasure out of life."

"You infer, of course," commented Mr. Ogden, coldly, "that it is not impossible to get too much money out of business. You talk like a socialist, Gwendolen. Where did you get hold of these astonishing theories?"

The girl stood erect, her cheeks still slightly flushed, but the gleam of anger gone from her eyes.

"I have no theories, father," she said, wearily. "I merely live from day to day, getting what fun I can out of life. And I'm not to have the money? You absolutely refuse to advance me a thousand, father?"

The frown returned to Mr. Ogden's brow, and he again nervously clutched the Oriental paper-weight.

"I refuse to countenance your extravagance, Gwendolen," he said, stubbornly. "If you could put yourself in my place——"

"*She can, and she must!*" came a voice from nowhere, that filled the library like a clap of thunder just above the roof of the house.

Richard Ogden dropped the Oriental paper-weight as if it had burned his hand, and, lo! beside his desk stood a tall, shadowy form, vague in outline, but sufficiently real to fill the distraught souls of father and daughter with dread and terror.

"*The decree hath gone forth,*" went on the voice, more subdued now than at first, but none the less horrifying, "*the decree hath gone forth that ye must change bodies for a season; thou who wast Richard the father, to be Gwendolen the daughter; and thou who wast Gwendolen the daughter, to be, in the sight of men, Richard the father. And may your eyes, that are closed, be opened; and may the wisdom that ye lack be yours, when the time for thy deliverance shall be at hand. Farewell! farewell! farewell!*"

It was as if the library-table had been struck by lightning. A flash, a clash; then, silence and a faint odor of sandalwood filled the room.

In her father's chair, with her soul imprisoned in his body, sat Gwendolen, gasping for breath.

"A fan, father," she murmured; "and water!"

Richard Ogden, in the outward seeming of a tall, handsome young woman, stood clasping the back of a stately chair, and glaring in amazement and horror at his daughter—or was it himself? His mind was too confused to grasp at once the full significance of the uncanny visitation that had begotten a miniature thunderstorm and a stupendous miracle in his library.

"It was that infernal paper-weight," he muttered, striving to loosen Gwendolen's tight-fitting jacket, while he gazed gloomily at the pale, heavy face of Richard Ogden.

"Did you ever read 'Vice Versa',

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father?" he presently heard Gwendolen asking, in his discarded voice.

"No, but I've seen 'A Message from Mars'," he replied, flushing angrily at the high pitch of his voice. "Why do you wear your gowns so tight, Gwendolen? I've always warned you against it, and now I know it's destroying your health. No wonder you're so flighty and unreasonable."

The heavy, unmelodious sobs of an old man came from the chair by the desk, and Richard Ogden was disgusted to see what an undignified exhibition his daughter was making of him.

"I'm no more flighty than you are," expostulated Gwendolen, in the heavy basso that her father had heretofore been proud of. "Why don't you sit down, father, and stop fussing with that gown? You'll ruin it, if you keep on."

To be thus chided in his own voice and by his own daughter was too much for old Ogden's nerves, and he sank awkwardly into a chair, a great longing for trousers sweeping over him.

"What are we going to do about it, my child?" he cried, in a high treble that jarred upon his exposed nerves.

"I suppose you'll take up social settlement work," he heard his deep voice saying, sarcastically. "There's the Vanderheydens' ball to-morrow night. Oh, father, I was looking forward to it so eagerly! You won't want to go—and I can't."

Again an old man's sobs, inspired by a young girl's despair, came to him from the desk.

"Maybe," suggested Ogden, gazing down with surprise and admiration at his daughter's beautiful hands, "maybe we'll be—er—readjusted by that time, little girl. Just what did that—er—electrical disturbance say? Do you recall its—or his—exact words, Gwendolen?"

A cold chill ran down the speaker's beautiful back. From nowhere in particular came a grave, deep, sonorous voice, saying:

"*May your eyes that are closed be opened; and may the wisdom that ye lack be yours, when the time for thy deliverance shall be at hand! Farewell! farewell! farewell!*"

"Stop!" shouted Richard Ogden, in his daughter's most imperious tones. "Come back! I wish to talk to you. I'll give you a hundred for—er—Oriental—er—missions, if you'll stop fooling, and—change us back. Do you hear me?"

But there came no answer to this cry of despair. The only sound in the library arose from Gwendolen's hysterical, hoarse sobs.

Ogden sat, motionless and silent, gazing down musingly at the rich jewels upon his daughter's patrician hand. For the first time in his life, the realization came to him that there was a limit to the power of money.

"Oh, father!" he heard his own voice exclaiming, presently, "I've got such a queer, nervous feeling. Would you—that is, would I—or would we both, do you think——?"

"What do you mean, Gwendolen?" he asked, petulantly, as his voice remained silent.

"I mean, father," said the girl, sitting erect in her chair, and crossing her father's legs in a characteristic way, "I mean that I feel just as if I'd like to smoke one of your cigars. I imagine that it would quiet my—or, rather, your—nerves. Would it jar you too much, father, to see me smoking?"

"Nothing'll ever jar me again," piped the old man, in sad falsetto. "Light up, won't you? I'd join you, little girl, if I dared; but, somehow, I don't feel quite up to it."

Father and daughter watched each other furtively, during the next few moments, oppressed by the awkwardness of the situation, and each curious regarding the other's thoughts. After clumsily lighting her cigar, Gwendolen had sunk back in her father's chair, and was blowing smoke into the air with the manner of one who is keenly enjoying the indulgence of a bad habit. Not far away sat her father, gazing at her enviously with her own big, dark, melancholy eyes, through which shone the soul of a querulous old man who

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had been forced by a cruel fate to do his smoking vicariously.

"Do you—er—do you like it, Gwen?" he asked, presently, smoothing his daughter's luxuriant hair back from his throbbing brow.

"It's very quieting," admitted the girl, gazing discontentedly at her father's pudgy hand as she knocked the ashes from her weed. "But are we dreaming, or awake, father? Isn't it marvelous how calmly we have taken it?"

"It would be such bad form, my child, to make a fuss about it," remarked Ogden, in his daughter's most conventional tones. Then, he arose and began to pace the library, nervously.

"I can't have you striding up and down my library with your hands behind your back," he heard his own voice repeating, sarcastically, between puffs; "it's distinctly unfeminine, father."

"That won't do, Gwendolen," he cried, angrily, striking the highest note of her conversational pitch. "We mustn't throw stones at each other now, or the situation will become actually unbearable. Does anybody dine with us this evening, daughter?"

"The Marmaduke Mortimers, Teddy Langdon and Evelyn de Peyster," answered the girl, with a hoarse groan.

"It's horrible!" piped the old man, tripping over his skirt as a thought struck him, and he hurried toward his desk.

"Where's that diabolical paperweight, Gwen?" he asked, feverishly, gazing searchingly at the carpet. "I dropped it right here just as the storm struck us."

"It's gone!" groaned Gwendolen, laying aside her cigar, uncrossing her father's legs, and peering at the floor with hopeless old eyes.

"Yes, it's gone," admitted her father, tripping back to his chair without stumbling over his gown. "I don't suppose there's any use offering a reward for it."

"No," growled his daughter, gloomily. "Our money won't help us much to get out of this scrape, I fear, father."

"*Our* money?" repeated Ogden, in a falsetto that implied suspicion

"Well," he heard his own voice say, reflectively, "I suppose it's really your money, father; but I'll have to look after it, won't I? That is, of course, until we recover, so to speak."

"But," murmured old Ogden, clasping his beautiful hands with a gesture characteristic of his daughter, and then tightening his fists, remembering who he was, "but, my dear child, the thing is impossible. Of course, with my advice, you might run my affairs for a time. But how am I going to attend to your matters? It's going to be very awkward for both of us. I can't dance."

Richard Ogden had never before heard his own voice ring out with so hearty a laugh as now vibrated through the library. He was annoyed, and justly so, at his daughter's ill-timed hilarity.

"What ails you, Gwendolen?" he cried, at the top of her voice. "Do you consider this affair a laughing matter? Just wait until you get a twinge of rheumatism—I've had several attacks of it to-day—and you'll wonder where the joke comes in. There! What's the matter now?"

The girl was weeping noisily, almost boisterously.

"How'll we get through dinner, father?" she cried, in the pathetic tones of an old man in sore distress of mind. "We'll have to be very, very careful, or they'll think we're—we're very much changed."

"Well, we are," purred Ogden, playfully. "So far as I'm concerned, I'm not sure that it isn't a change for the better, Gwen. Am I to flirt with Teddy Langdon at dinner?"

"How inconsistent you are, father!" growled the girl, in Ogden's gruffest tones. "A while ago, you were accusing me of the sin of frivolity, and now, I actually believe, you look forward to a dinner-party and a chance to—to——"

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"I don't wonder that you can't finish the sentence," murmured her father, wearily. "I think we'll both be crazy before to-morrow if that diabolical electric disturbance doesn't return to-night. By the way, Gwen, I wish you'd light another cigar. I think it rather soothes my nerves to see you smoke."

II

"It's an amazing situation," remarked Gwendolen, musingly, in her father's deep basso, as she lighted a match. "Here I sit, smoking your cigars, father, in order to quiet your nerves, or mine, or, perhaps, both. But are you grateful to me for puffing tobacco in your behalf? No, father; you show no consideration for my feelings. You threaten me with a return of your rheumatism, and, rather brazenly, rejoice at the prospect of one of my flirtations. It is unbearable. Well, James?"

The butler, a typical lackey of the Anglo-American school, murmured an apology for his intrusion.

"But, Mr. Ogden, it's this way, sir. The hexpert, so to speak, sir, from the helectric company, has come to hexamine the bells and lights, Mr. Ogden, the same being hout of horder, as hit were. 'E was sayin' as 'ow 'e'd like to begin 'ere, sir, with your permission, Mr. Ogden."

"Send him here at once, James," ordered Gwendolen, in her father's usual peremptory manner. "You needn't follow him, James."

"Very good, sir. 'E'll be 'ere at once, sir."

With that, the butler retired, and Richard Ogden sprang to Gwendolen's feet in consternation.

"What did you do that for?" he piped, shrilly, glaring at his outward presentment with his daughter's expressive eyes, now aglow with an old man's anger. "Haven't you had enough electric tomfoolery for one day, girl? Do you wish to have this thing get into the newspapers? An electrical expert, indeed!—the last man on earth I'd care to see me in this—er—undignified female costume! Are you mad, Gwendolen?"

"Sit down and keep cool, papa," commanded the girl, gruffly. "Do you think that I'm going to toddle around in your body for an indefinite period if the transposition was really caused by an electrical disturbance? If you'll keep quiet and try to act like a perfect lady, I'll ask this expert a few questions that may help us, father, to become readjusted. Ah, here he is."

"Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Ogden," began the thin-faced, keen-eyed electrician, deferentially, as he approached the library-table, glancing at the bulbs above it. "There's nothing much to be done, sir, I imagine. You have had no trouble with the system heretofore?"

"None at all," answered Gwendolen, with her father's most pompous manner. "This is the first time that we've had any serious disturbance—that is, any electrical—as I was saying——"

"You don't know what you're saying," muttered her father, angrily; and the electrician cast a glance of surprise at a beautiful young woman whose garb was conventional but whose manners seemed to be eccentric.

"What I wished to ask you," recommenced Gwendolen, waving one of her father's fat hands in the air, as if to sweep away the cobwebs that she had spun, "what I wished to ask you, sir, was, not what is the matter with our electric lights, but what——?"

"Gwen!" cried the outward seeming of Gwendolen, in a warning falsetto. Again, there came a gleam of astonishment to the electrician's eyes as he glanced furtively at the tailor-made girl, whose nerves, more than the electric lights, seemed to be in need of an expert.

"What I was about to say," went on the girl, emphasizing the note of stubbornness in her father's voice, "was that in the practice of your profession, sir, you must meet with curious electrical phenomena that science

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has not been able, as yet, wholly to explain."

"In a measure, that is true, sir," admitted the electrician, leaning against the library-table, and gazing at Mr. Ogden, as he supposed, with the expression of a specialist who is pleased to find a layman taking an interest in the details of his specialty. "Theoretically, there is much that is mysterious about the force that we call electricity. Practically, we have little to learn about it. It is very much, sir, as if we had made a slave of a giant whose origin, nature and general disposition we didn't know much about."

"Very well put, sir," piped the old man, showing his daughter's teeth in an appreciative smile.

"A handsome girl," thought the expert, "but extremely queer. I suppose it's due to the kind of life she leads."

He was recalled to the subject under discussion by Ogden's voice, inspired by Gwendolen's forlorn hope.

"Did you ever, sir, hear of electricity having any psychical influence or power? In other words, could an electric shock change, or in any way modify, an individual's personality, either permanently or temporarily?"

"What's the old man driving at?" the electrician asked himself. Then, he said, aloud: "I have never gone into the subject of the psychical significance of electricity—if it has any. An electric shock could not readily alter a personality, of course, although it might temporarily bring about an apparent, but superficial, change in an individual's character."

"That's it! That's the thing in a nutshell!" cried Ogden, in tones that Gwendolen realized she had used only in moments of unusual enthusiasm. "Temporary! superficial! apparent, not real! That's it! Now, what do you think you could do about it? I mean——"

The electrician was gazing at what appeared to be an excited young woman, with eyes that were big with astonishment. He had never heard any gossip to the effect that Richard Ogden and his daughter were eccentric; but, surely, they were acting at present in a most unconventional, even flighty, way.

"What my daughter intended to ask," put in Gwendolen, again assuming her father's most pompous bearing, "was this: Suppose that an electrical disturbance had forced its way into an erstwhile happy household——"

"Rubbish!" murmured her father, waving a dainty hand in the air, protestingly.

"Be quiet, girl!" commanded Gwendolen, curtly. "As I was saying, had forced its way into an erstwhile happy household, to the effect that——"

"That the last shall be first and the first last," piped her father, shrilly; "what would you do, then, sir? I ask you confidentially—you won't be quoted, sir—what would you do under such circumstances?"

A frightened expression had come into the electrician's thin, pale face, as these questions had been hurled at him by a beautiful young woman, who seemed to be laboring under some internal excitement that caused her voice to tremble, her cheeks to flush, and her dark eyes to flash.

"Won't you be seated, sir?" asked Gwendolen, pointing a pudgy finger toward a chair. The electrician was glad to avail himself of this invitation, for he had begun to feel a bit faint.

"You were about to say?" queried the expert, gazing interrogatively at him whom he supposed to be Mr. Richard Ogden.

"I was about to say," began Gwendolen, impressively, having learned by this time how to use her father's voice most effectively, "I was about to say—and I trust, my daughter, I shall not be interrupted—that to a rising young electrician there could come nothing more gratifying than a new, unprecedented professional problem, especially if, in its solution, there lay a large sum of money."

"Very good!" cried old Ogden, in a kind of whistle.

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"But it's the stiffest thing you ever tackled, sir," went on Gwendolen, shaking her father's fist at an imaginary adversary.

"It's a dandy, in its way, sir," giggled the old man, nervously.

The electrician shifted his feet uneasily, and then glanced at his watch.

"Pardon me," he said, firmly, "but my time is not my own. Will it take you long, Mr. Ogden, to give me the necessary data?"

"We haven't got 'em!" cried the old man, clasping Gwendolen's hands together, in a hopeless kind of way. "There was a roar and a flash—and there you are. If you call that data, I don't. But you're welcome to what we know, sir."

"Will you permit me, my daughter, to take charge of this matter?" asked Gwendolen, gruffly. Then, she turned her father's heavy, immobile face toward the electrician.

"Our difficulty lies just here, sir!" she went on. "If we tell you the whole truth, you will doubt our sanity. If we suppress a part of the truth, your assistance can be of no service to us. You have, doubtless, a scientific mind. Your mental attitude, of course, is one of indifference, or even mockery, toward phenomena not recognized as coming within the ken of science."

"No such phenomena, Mr. Ogden, exist in these enlightened days. Many of the greatest scientists in the world have become interested, of late, in manifestations that were thought to be, a few years ago, beneath the notice of the sane investigator. Even ghosts are now being studied by a society composed of men famous in various departments of science."

The electrician spoke with the air of one whose scientific specialty had not tended to narrow his mind.

"But you've never happened to hear of a spectral old man in black in your profession?" piped up Mr. Ogden, eagerly, much to his daughter's annoyance.

"I'm glad," the latter hastened to say, in her father's most superior manner, "I'm glad, sir, that you hold such a liberal attitude toward the scientific problems of the day. I am much inclined to lay the whole matter before you; for I assure you, sir, that my daughter and myself are in sore need of advice."

"You see, it wouldn't be likely, sir," suggested old Ogden, with a girlish giggle, "it wouldn't be at all likely that my daughter and I should both go crazy at the same moment."

"Gwendolen!" exclaimed his daughter, reprovingly.

The electrician had risen to his feet, and was again glancing at his watch.

"I can see, Mr. Ogden," he said, addressing Gwendolen, without knowing it, "I can see that you have much to tell me that must be of the most intense interest from a scientific standpoint. But, as I said before, my time is not my own. I am at leisure in the evening. If you should care to consult me professionally in this matter, I could call upon you at any time before midnight. As it is, I must take my departure at once."

"Come back at eleven to-night, will you?" cried old Ogden, like a drowning person catching at a straw.

"If it would be convenient for you to return at eleven," suggested Gwendolen, getting awkwardly to her father's feet, "we should be much pleased to lay before you, sir, a most amazing problem, the solution of which, as I said before, would greatly redound to your financial benefit, though, under the circumstances, of course, it could add nothing to your fame."

"Thank you," said the electrician, bowing stiffly. "I shall be here, sir, at eleven to-night, sharp. Good day, sir. Good day, Miss Ogden."

Thereupon, he hurried from the library, concealing, as best he could, his relief at making his escape. In the hall, he came upon the butler.

"How long have you been in Mr. Ogden's service?" asked the electrician, abruptly.

The butler drew himself up haughtily, and gazed with cold displeasure at his inquisitor. "Hi've 'ad the honor of serving Mr. Ogden for the past five

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years," he answered, with the air of one who is polite rather by habit than inclination.

"Rather peculiar, aren't they?—Ogden and his daughter. Somewhat eccentric, I mean."

The butler threw open the front door with exaggerated ceremony.

"Hi find them very congenial, sir," answered the loyal servant, freezingly. "Hi trust that you will not find it necessary to return, sir"

"Oh, yes, James," remarked the electrician, a dry smile playing about his thin lips, as he passed out, "I shall be back at eleven to-night—by appointment."

III

"It doesn't seem to have been very successful," grumbled Gwendolen, leaning back heavily in her father's chair, as she felt a twinge of his predicted rheumatism.

"Well, whose fault was it?" asked her father, in a shrill, accusatory voice. "You did all the talking, didn't you?"

"Not all of it," protested his daughter, in a melancholy basso.

"But he looked at you as if he thought you were crazy," piped Ogden, indiscreetly.

"And how did he look at you, father? He'll tell his wife at dinner that the famous society success, Gwendolen Ogden, is the weirdest, most eccentric young thing that ever happened Frankly, father, you make an absurd person of me."

"And what do you make of me, Gwendolen?" cried the old man, kicking petulantly at the air with a dainty little foot that pleased his eye, despite his annoyance. "Do you wish to know? It's a caricature, that's all it is. You deliberately exaggerate all my delicate little peculiarities. That's what startled that electrician, and made him take to flight. You always put the loud pedal on my rather melodious voice, and what's the result? You make me sound, so to speak, explosive. When you become emphatic, I appear to thunder. And you use my gestures badly, Gwen. I have never before this black day, during a long life of dignified self-poise, acted like a feverish Frenchman suffering from acute dyspepsia."

"Father!" growled the girl, protestingly.

"I tell you, Gwendolen," continued Mr. Ogden, in a trembling falsetto, "that you mustn't exaggerate me, as it were, or you'll make me a laughing-stock to the whole world. I'm not a high-strung old donkey, with kittenish ways. Kindly bear that in mind, my daughter That electrical expert has gone away from here with a very curious impression of Richard Ogden; you may be sure of that, Gwendolen."

"And what do you supppose, father, he thinks of me—of Gwendolen Ogden?" asked the girl, gruffly, striking the desk with her father's clenched fist. "Do you think you're a great—well, a great actress, I suppose I should say? Did you catch the expression in his eyes when he looked at you, thinking you were I? Really, father, you were awfully funny If it wasn't for the horror of the frightful plight we're in, I could laugh now at the way you acted That hysterical giggle of yours, father! You must struggle against it! Try to be brave and strong, and don't give way to it It makes me seem insane I'll admit that it's good form, at present, to be enthusiastic and vivacious, but you mustn't become delirious, father. You actually looked, at times, like a beautiful young woman laughing madly at a nightmare."

Ogden sat gazing moodily at his daughter's fair hands, folded wearily in his lap. He was sufficiently just by nature to admit that there was much truth in his daughter's accusation. He realized that he had, as it were, gone to extremes as a young woman, and the possibilities of the near future struck a chill to his bosom.

"We must hold a rehearsal before we dress for dinner," he remarked, in Gwendolen's quietest tones. "Ring for James, won't you, Gwen? And, for heaven's sake, don't roar at

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him as if he were deaf. And don't be always tugging at my collar and cuffs. It looks flighty—suggests a symptom of paresis, in fact."

The butler entered the library hurriedly. Despite his haughty rejection of the electrician's suggestion that Mr. Ogden and his daughter were eccentric, James was annoyed and somewhat worried by the impression they had made upon the keen-eyed expert.

"You showed the man out?" queried Gwendolen, in her father's calmest manner. "What did he say to you, James?"

The butler, for once in his phlegmatic life, showed embarrassment, to hide which he answered too hastily for discretion.

"'E showed a tendency, so to speak, sir, to be himpudent. 'Is remarks, Mr. Ogden, sprung, hif you'll permit me the suggestion, from the henvy of the lower classes."

"But this electrician, James," objected Gwendolen, pompously, anxious to draw the butler out, "this electrician is not one of the lower classes. He is a highly intelligent and well-educated specialist, drawing a large salary for his scientific attainments."

The butler drew himself up stiffly. "'E's no gentleman, sir. I hassure you, 'e's no gentleman."

"James," piped up Mr. Ogden, growing impatient at his daughter's cross-questioning, "James, did you take the exact time of that—er—that little thunder-storm this afternoon?"

The butler could not refrain from a gasp of astonishment when he turned, as he imagined, toward his employer's daughter.

"Thunder-storm, Miss Ogden?" he exclaimed, with an unusual display of animation. "Hif you'll be so good as to permit me to say so, miss, there 'asn't been a cloud in the sky to-day."

"You heard nothing about an hour ago? no crash? You saw no lightning?" Mr. Ogden was using Gwendolen's voice at the top notch.

"No, miss," answered James, uneasily, fearing to offend his fair inquisitor.

"That will do, James," said Gwendolen, waving a pudgy hand toward the door; "you may go."

The butler strode from the library, agitation in his face and bearing. The astounding suspicion had come to him that the electrician might have had some reasonable cause for his peculiar remarks.

"What in the name of common-sense did you do that for, father?" grumbled Gwendolen, her father's heavy face flushed with annoyance.

"The trouble is," cried old Ogden, like a petulant girl, "the trouble is that you think you're brighter than I am, Gwendolen. You act as if I'd lost my mind, as well as my body. What I wished to find out was whether that—er—electrical disturbance was general or only local. You seem to mistrust my ability to do and say the right thing at the right moment, my child. There you are, tugging at my cuffs again. What ails you, Gwendolen? Can't you wear my garments in a quiet and gentlemanly manner?"

"Will the pot kindly quit calling the kettle black?" protested the girl, gruffly. "Just look at my hair, father! You've pushed it all out of shape, trying to rub a little sense into your head."

"Into *your* head, you mean," retorted her father, giggling again. "But, really, Gwendolen, these recriminations must cease. We must learn to take each other calmly. It's nearly time to dress for dinner."

"I shall dine as I am," growled Gwendolen, curtly.

"But you can't," said old Ogden, rather hysterically. "It is your duty, my daughter, to keep up my position. I forbid you to receive our guests in a business suit. It would awaken suspicion, at once."

"What are you going to wear, daddy?" asked the girl, with a hoarse chuckle.

"What I have on," answered her father, in a sharp falsetto. "It's a becoming costume, isn't it?"

"So is mine—or, rather, yours, father. You always did look better in

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grays than blacks. You show your age in your evening clothes."

There was a touch of hysteria in Gwendolen's voice when her father used it again to exclaim:

"If we could only find that paper-weight, Gwen! I wonder what that black demon's name is? He seems to be charged with electricity. If I could get hold of him on the long-distance telephone——"

"Why do you talk such nonsense, father?" growled Gwendolen, gloomily. "We are absolutely powerless in this matter, and you know it. He'll come back to us, in his own good time. Meanwhile, we must make the best of it. I suppose, as you say, daddy, we must change our clothes for dinner. But I don't——"

"I didn't say that at all, child," protested the old man, feverishly. "I said that you mustn't receive our guests in that business suit of mine. You'll find it easy enough to get into my evening clothes. But how the dickens could I get out of this costume into one of your dinner gowns? And, if I managed it, Gwen, I'd be sure to catch cold. Dr. Robertson told me only yesterday that I must avoid draughts."

"That isn't logical, father," remarked Gwendolen, gruffly. "I haven't had a cold since I came out—which is the important point, so far as you are concerned at present, worse luck."

"But how about your maid, Gwen?" asked old Ogden, a slight flush coming into his damask cheeks. "I can't get dressed without her, but I couldn't endure her presence. I'm rather sorry, now, that I've always been too old-fashioned to have a valet."

"I'm very glad of it," remarked his daughter, with all the emphasis of her father's lower register. "As for my maid, you'd better dismiss her for the evening, when you go up-stairs."

"What is your maid's name?" queried old Ogden, shrilly.

"Jeannette," answered his former voice.

"Summon James, will you? I wish to give him an order, Gwen."

"What are you going to do now, father?" growled his daughter, suspiciously. "Remember, James suspects that you are queer to-day."

Old Ogden waved his hands in the air, impatiently.

"Send for James, or I'll make the house resound with your screams. Just remember, Gwendolen, that I didn't resign my paternal authority when I was hurled into your alabaster body. Obey me at once, or I'll reduce your quarterly allowance one-half."

"That's beyond your power at present, father," remarked the girl, grimly. "But I'll have James in, at once. And do be careful, father. Don't giggle; and, if you can sit comfortably, as a woman should, I'd be much obliged to you."

As the butler reëntered the library, his master pulled himself together, and determined to act like a perfect lady.

"James," he began, in his daughter's most dulcet tones, fumbling at her bodice, and then turning red in the face. "Gwen—I mean—er—father," he recommenced, "you'll find a roll of bills in my—your waistcoat-pocket. Toss it over here, won't you?"

The butler stood watching the scene with an unmoved countenance, but with eyes that could not hide their gleam of mingled astonishment and protest.

Having regained his money, Mr. Ogden found his self-control also restored to him.

"My—my maid, you know, James; her name's—er—Jeannette; last name doesn't matter. You're to give her this, James; it's a ten-dollar bill. Tell her to leave the house at once. She's to dine at a restaurant, and spend the evening at a theatre. And, James, tell her she may sleep late in the morning. I sha'n't need her before ten o'clock."

Forcing himself to disguise the conflicting emotions that were at war in his flunkey soul, James respectfully grasped the bank-note extended to him by the white, tapering hand of his young mistress.

"Is that hall, Miss Ogden?" he asked, perfunctorily.

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"That's all," piped old Ogden, in a tone of relief. "Don't forget the name, James; Jeannette, you know. Her last name doesn't count."

The butler stalked, with moody dignity, out of the library, softly closing the door behind him.

"There, Gwendolen," cried her father, in a triumphant voice; "what do you think of that? I could give some of our leading actors points in their art, don't you think so?"

He glanced with large, shining, youthful eyes at an old man in a state of semi-collapse.

"It is simply horrible!" groaned Gwendolen, rubbing a chubby, cold hand across her father's brow. "James thinks I'm crazy—I'm sure he does!"

IV

Richard Ogden, gazing down moodily at his beautiful hands and dainty little feet, sat alone in the library, after Gwendolen had departed, in the lowest of spirits, to dress his portly old form for a dinner-party. His reverie was painful. Despite his charming exterior, the old man felt ill at ease.

"At my time of life," he murmured, rather foolishly, to himself, "such sudden changes are distressing. And that infernal electrical disturbance came so unexpectedly! If we'd had a few moments in which to prepare ourselves for a new deal! But it was crash, bang! and here we are, in danger every moment of making a public exhibition of a kind of private miracle. It's not merely embarrassing, it's almost disgraceful."

The silence was oppressive. Presently, a clock relieved the situation by slowly and distinctly announcing the hour of five.

"Half an hour before Gwen wishes me to go up-stairs," murmured the old man, restlessly. Then, he seized the skirt of his tailor-made gown, and tripped lightly down the library to a corner locker not devoted to books. A moment later, he stood beside the library-table gazing down at a decanter, a siphon of vichy and a tall glass, Gwendolen's beautiful face wreathed in smiles.

"Of course, it's an experiment," murmured the old man to himself, in a flute-like voice. "I don't believe Gwendolen knows what a high-ball is. Just how it will affect her constitution, I have no way of knowing. But I'll have nervous prostration or melancholia if I try to go through the next hour without a bracer. So, here goes! Live or die, survive or perish, I'll have one high-ball, at least. And I don't believe it will affect me, after all. Gwendolen, if I remember rightly, has been out two seasons."

Mr. Ogden's worst fears were soon allayed. The stimulant acted very nicely, and, leaving the decanter on the table, in case of emergency, he returned to his chair, seating himself therein with a contented giggle.

"I believe it's going to take all right," he soliloquized. "Perhaps, tomorrow, if we are not readjusted, I may have the courage to try a cigar. But I mustn't go too fast, at first. Great Scott! who the dickens is this?"

The library door had opened and closed quickly, and down the room had glided a young woman, evidently in a high state of excitement.

"Oh, mademoiselle, what does eet mean?" gasped the dark-eyed damsel, coming to a standstill beside the library-table, and thrusting a ten-dollar bill toward the old man, whose white cheek was flushed, while his beautiful hands had turned cold. "You send me thees, and tell me—your Jeannette—to begone to ze café and ze theatre! Who ees to dress mademoiselle's hair? Who ees to arrange her corsage? How—oh, tell me, how has your Jeannette offended her beautiful meestress? *Je ne comprends pas!* Tell me, mademoiselle, what ees ze mattaire, *je vous prie!*"

"Please don't be—so explosive!" piped old Ogden, petulantly, putting up a fair hand, as if to ward off a blow. "Isn't ten dollars enough, Jeannette? Can't you make an even-

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ing of it for that? I'll make it twenty, if you really wish it."

The French girl turned and glanced at the decanter of whiskey and siphon of vichy. Then, she resumed her former attitude, and stood gazing at her young mistress with eyes big and black with amazement and reproach.

"Mademoiselle ees not well," she affirmed, presently. "Jeannette will not go out to-night. Will not mademoiselle come up to her dressing-room? There ees none too much time for your hair, even now, mademoiselle. You will pardon me for saying so, but your hair ees vare much tousled."

"Well—er—you see, Jeannette," explained Mr. Ogden, thrusting Gwendolen's dark locks back from her damp forehead, "you see, we—er—had quite a sharp little thunder-storm here this afternoon, and my—chignon, or pompadour, got blown about a bit. But I'll tie it up all right by myself. Don't give yourself a moment's uneasiness about my hair. Run along, now, Jeannette, *ma petite*. Go down to some café, and have a nice dinner. Then, go to a play—something lively, you know—and come back any time. Good-bye!"

Jeannette had hesitated for a moment after the conclusion of Mr. Ogden's undignified remarks, unwilling to abandon her mistress in such an amazing and unprecedented plight. But it was evident that her devotion at this crisis would not be well received; so, slowly and reluctantly, she turned to leave the library.

"*Au revoir, mademoiselle*," she murmured, sorrowfully, as she approached the door.

"You ought to have quite a fine time with ten dollars, Jeannette," the old man called after her, in a youthful tone; "but, as I said, if you wish ten more, why——"

But Jeannette had disappeared before he could complete the sentence.

"I'm glad she's gone," murmured Ogden. "A night off will do her good. She looks worried and nervous. I'm afraid Gwendolen overworks the girl. But she's too sudden for my taste. If Gwendolen and I can't get the electricity out of our systems, I'll be obliged to discharge this Jeannette."

Impulsively, the old man, who was looking strangely beautiful at this moment, the recent high-ball having flushed his velvety cheeks, and a gleam of excitement having come into Gwendolen's dark, luminous eyes, touched a button that brought the butler at once to the library.

"Has she gone, James?" asked Mr. Ogden, in the voice of an overwrought girl.

"Do you mean Jeannette, Miss Ogden?" asked the butler, his eyes resting, in pained surprise for a moment, upon the decanter. "Hif you do, miss, I may say as 'ow she 'as left the 'ouse for the hevening, miss."

"That's one for our side," murmured the old man, contentedly. Then, it flashed into his mind that it would be well to take time by the forelock.

"I wish you to exercise great care at dinner to-night, James. The fact is that my father is not feeling especially well, and you must not become confused if he should happen to do or say anything that might seem—eccentric. You see, James, that little thunder-storm this afternoon affected his nerves. You'll bear this in mind, won't you, James?"

"Yes, miss," answered the butler, meekly. "Shall I return this decanter and siphon to the locker, with your permission, miss?"

James stood gazing respectfully, for a time, at what seemed to be a handsome young woman engaged in a mental conflict. The girl glanced several times from his stolid face to the decanter and back again. Then, old Ogden said in smooth, soft, dulcet tones:

"If you would be so kind, James, as to pour me out about two fingers, please. Then, fill the glass to the very top with vichy. After that, you may return those glasses to their hiding-place."

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For once, in a long life of professional obedience to orders, the butler was inclined to mutiny. While it was true that Miss Ogden did not seem to be at all under the influence of a stimulant, James harbored a healthy prejudice against alcohol as a plaything for young women. But habit proved to be stronger than prejudice, in this instance, and, after a momentary hesitation, the servant found himself carefully obeying the behest of his young mistress. He had just handed the girl the bubbling high-ball, and was about to remove the decanter from the table, when a portly, pompous old gentleman, handsomely garbed in evening dress, entered the library with a kind of hysterical giggle that made his heavy face look almost idiotic as James, tray in hand, paused to glance at it.

"What does this mean?" cried Gwendolen, astonishment and dismay echoing through her father's voice. "Did you feel faint—my daughter?"

"Faint?" repeated old Ogden, shrilly, sipping his high-ball. "Faint's not the word, Gwen—I mean, father. I was actually in a comatose condition, my—my dear. If it hadn't been for James, who happened to know where to find a restorative, I wouldn't have been one, two, three by dinner-time."

The girl had dropped into a chair, her father's heavy face displaying the consternation that had filled her soul with panic.

"Leave the room, James!" she ordered, gruffly. "We won't need you again before dinner."

The butler, turning the key of the locker, hurried from the library, striving to maintain his usual haughty indifference to externals, but inwardly alarmed at the possibilities of the near future.

"I am amazed at you, father," growled the girl, glaring angrily at a stunningly handsome young woman who sat across the room, contentedly sipping whiskey and vichy, apparently indifferent to the rapid flight of time. "What will James think of me? How many of—of those have you had, father?"

"Not more than is good for you, my dear," replied the old man, almost merrily. "You see, Gwen, it's been a very trying afternoon, and what with electric shocks and that explosive maid of yours, and the awful ordeal before us, and everything, I really needed a bracer. But you needn't worry, my child. It's taking very nicely. I suppose it's time for me to dress."

"I laid out in your room everything you'll need, father," remarked his daughter in a dull, hopeless voice.

"I think I can manage things well enough," murmured the old man, reflectively. "I may make a few mistakes, of course; but, when you come to think of it, my child, it's amazing how much we learn as we go through life. But the gown will stump me, naturally. By the way, my dear, if you'll pardon the question, when you dress for dinner, at which end, so to speak, do you generally begin?"

Gwendolen laughed aloud in her father's hearty voice.

"You'd better do my hair first, daddy. Do you think you can manage it?"

"Oh, I'll tie it up all right," cried the old man, in a kind of self-satisfied whistle. "That's what I said to that little French bundle of firecrackers. 'Jeannette,' I said, very gently and kindly, you know, 'Jeannette, give yourself no uneasiness about my bangs and switches. I can pin them up, Jeannette,' I said, perfectly calm all the time; 'I can pin them up, Jeannette to—er—beat the band!'"

"Father!" cried his daughter in dismay, tugging at an eighteen-inch collar as if it choked her. "Has Jeannette been here?"

"She came in like a lion, and she went out like a whole menagerie," answered old Ogden, petulantly. "But she ought to have a fine time with ten dollars, don't you think so, Gwen? I was perfectly willing to give her more, but she wouldn't wait. She's proud, my dear. If we aren't discharged——"

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"Discharged!" queried a pompous-looking man, whose heavy face wore a puzzled, worried expression.

"That's what I said, Gwendolen, 'discharged,'" piped her father, hotly. "If we aren't discharged electrically to-morrow, we'll discharge that French pyrotechnical display in the morning. But this is neither here nor there. I must go to my toilette. You say I'm to begin at the top, Gwen?"

The girl could not refrain from chuckling behind her expansive shirt-front.

"Don't become alarmed, father," she said, reassuringly, rising and following a slender, patrician-looking maiden toward the library door. "You'll find it all easier than you imagine."

Her father paused for a moment near the locker. "Don't you think, my dear, that one more very weak high-ball would——?"

"Not another drop, father," growled the girl, peremptorily. "Hurry, now! If you don't make haste, our guests will be here before you are dressed."

V

It was a relief to Gwendolen to find herself alone in the library. She needed a few moments of self-communion before confronting her guests in the outward seeming of her father. She felt restless, rheumatic, rebellious. That the coming evening would demand of her the firmest self-control, the nicest tact and the most constant vigilance, the girl fully realized. She flushed angrily as she crossed her father's legs, and caught a glimpse of a large foot, pinched by a shining, patent-leather shoe. Gwendolen had always been proud of her dainty, high-arched feet.

"Pardon me, Mr. Ogden," said the butler, entering the library at that moment in a hurried, excited way entirely foreign to his nature and habits. "There is a lady 'ere— hi may say a young lady, sir, if you'll hexcuse me—hand she says as 'ow she must see you hat once, sir."

A hopeless, helpless, forlorn kind of feeling crept over Gwendolen like a malarial chill. But her courage had not deserted her.

"What is her name, James?"

"She said, with your permission, sir, that you'd know 'er name. She says she must see you hat once, sir, and that you'll hunderstand why."

Gwendolen sat silent for a time, striving to meet this unexpected crisis with outward calmness. She felt like one who is groping for a door-knob in the dark. That her father was trustee of several estates, executor of various wills, and business adviser to a number of women, she well knew. But had one of his clients required his counsel at this unreasonable hour, would she not have sent in her name, with an apology and a hint as to her needs? Surely, her father's present caller was most unconventional in her mode of procedure. There seemed to be both mystery and menace in her message, and that James had dared to repeat it to his master was proof positive that this young woman, whoever she might be, was not a weak and insignificant personality.

It was very difficult for Gwendolen, as James stood there, gazing respectfully but, perhaps, somewhat impatiently at the outward seeming of his master, to choose between the two courses of action at her disposal. She might order James to dismiss this brazen young woman without more ado; or she might receive her father's untimely caller here in the library for a few brief moments, getting rid of her with as much, or as little, diplomacy as the intruder and her business seemed to call for. This latter course of procedure the girl reluctantly decided to adopt, regretting the necessity of squandering a single volt of her depleted nervous energy before the arrival of her dinner-guests.

"Show the young woman in here, James," said the girl, presently, in her father's gruffest tones. "If—er—my

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daughter sends for me, say that I shall be with her, presently."

With splendid self-control, the butler kept his heavy features pinned to their accustomed non-committal place, and stalked pompously from the room, leaving behind him, as he imagined, an old man whose pallor was intensified by contrast with his black costume.

"Father is such a good man," Gwendolen kept repeating, soothingly, to herself. "He is inclined to be autocratic, and I have sometimes felt that he was not as generous as he might be, but I'm sure that is all one can say against him."

She stood erect, not very gracefully, as she saw a young woman, whose blond beauty was almost startling as it broke suddenly upon Gwendolen's gaze, move swiftly toward her. Her caller's attire was simple and not very costly, but thoroughly *à la mode* and extremely becoming to her perfect figure and the delicate shades of her hair and complexion.

"It was so kind of you to receive me at this inopportune hour, Richard," said the fair stranger, thrusting a neatly-gloved hand into Gwendolen's reluctant grasp. "But why do you stare at me, as if I were unwelcome, even uncanny? I thought you were always glad to see me, Richard. But you don't look well. Sit down. Are you faint? Is there anything the matter with you, Richard?"

"Nothing at all," growled Gwendolen, sinking into the chair; "I'm unusually well, in fact. I never felt so young in my life." There was a suggestion of hysteria in the old man's voice as his daughter said this.

His handsome caller, who seemed to be perfectly self-assured, had seated herself calmly in the chair recently occupied by the real Richard Ogden.

"But you don't appear to be glad to see me, Richard," she remarked, complainingly. "You're hungry, I suppose. It's little a man cares about anybody during the *mauvais quatre d'heure* before dinner."

"Knowing that," remarked Gwendolen, relaxing her father's features in a perfunctory smile, "you would not have come here at just this time, unless you had had something of great importance to say."

A pouting, defiant expression crept into the clear-cut, symmetrical face of Richard Ogden's beautiful client.

"You mean, Richard, that it's high time that I justified my intrusion, I suppose. But you must be more patient, really. I have never before seen you in such a mood as this, and I must get accustomed to it, before I can talk much."

"You have much to talk about, then?" asked Gwendolen, in a kind of hoarse groan.

"Not much," retorted the stranger, making an impatient gesture with her right hand. "I wish you to do the talking, Richard. I'm here for advice. *He has come back!*"

"Has he, really?" queried Gwendolen, in a dull, indifferent voice. "Didn't you expect him?"

A combination of annoyance and amazement had flashed into the blond woman's countenance.

"What is the matter with you, Richard?" she asked, again, gazing searchingly at the old man's face. "Expect him, indeed! You know I thought he was dead."

"Pardon me, Mr. Ogden," said James, entering the library at that instant, and pausing near the door. "Hi'm sorry to hintrude, sir, but Miss Ogden wishes to know has to whether you're hat liberty to come to 'er hat once, sir."

Gwendolen stood up, catching a twinge of rheumatism as she drew herself erect.

"Tell—er—my daughter, James, that I shall come to her immediately," she said. Then, she reseated herself, feeling that it would be unwarrantably rude to leave the library and her mysterious caller in this impulsive way. "Yes," she managed to say, glancing at the latter, "yes, of course, I knew you thought he was dead. But he has been spared to you. How nice that is, isn't it?"

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"Richard!" cried Mr. Ogden's fair client, standing upright, a strange gleam in her blue eyes, her cheeks flushed red.

"You'll accept my congratulations, won't you?" remarked Gwendolen, in her father's most pompous manner, rising with slow dignity, and extending a pudgy hand toward his astonished caller. "I'm so glad that you cared enough for my advice to call —er—at any old time, and get it. Just to think of it! You thought he was dead, and he has come back to you! How thankful you should be! And, now, I'm sure you will excuse me. We have a few guests coming to dinner, and my daughter wishes to consult me concerning various details of the function. It was so kind of you to come to me with your news. You know that I feel very grateful to you for the value you place upon my advice. My great regret is that I could not have devoted more time to your—er—that is, his—to—to——"

The beautiful blonde had been stepping reluctantly backward, retreating in silent protest before the ceremonious politeness of a large, domineering old man, who was evidently trying to sweep her out of the house without the loss of either his temper or his dignity. The anger had died out of her eyes, and they showed nothing but astonishment as they rested upon Richard Ogden's smiling, but determined, face. The young woman's forced retreat was brought to a sharp halt by a shrill falsetto just outside the library door.

"Gwen! for heaven's sake!" said the voice.

The door was flung open, and a dishevelled maiden, in a stunning gown of black lace, unfastened at the back, stumbled into the room, her black hair hanging about her ears and forehead, her dark eyes snapping with impatience, her slender, white hands clutching wildly at her corsage.

"My daughter! What does this mean?" exclaimed Gwendolen, gruffly, displaying marvelous presence of mind.

"What does it mean?" piped old Ogden, hotly. "It means that you said it was easy, and it's the damnedest kind of a fool puzzle! I began at the top, as you told me to, and got halfway down. Then, the top got loose, and I began again. I haven't got four hands. Why didn't you come to me? Hello! What are *you* doing here?"

Two young women, both beautiful, the one an astonished blonde, the other an amazed brunette, stood staring at each other, lips apart, eyes wide open.

"You have forgotten your manners, my daughter," Gwendolen hastened to say, chidingly, giving a splendid rendition of the rôle of a stern parent, shocked at a daughter's lack of selfpoise.

"I beg your pardon," cried old Ogden, in a kind of hysterical whistle, "but, you see, I've been up against it all by myself. Your—our—that is, my French maid has gone off with ten dollars to have a pleasant evening —that's enough, don't you think?— and I've been trying to climb into these togs all by myself. I look it, don't I—er—father?"

Richard Ogden's fair caller had managed to make her way to the open door, and now stood glancing from father to daughter, in a hopeless, hunted manner, her bearing wrung dry of all appearance of either self-confidence or anger. She lingered there for a moment, stunned and dazed, but still glorious in her blond beauty.

"May I—may I see you to-morrow, Richard?" she faltered.

Old Ogden, clutching a black gown frantically, realized that for a moment he had lost control of Gwendolen's voice. This was fortunate, for Gwendolen, who began to see a ray of light in the gloom, had the presence of mind to answer quickly, in a benevolent kind of basso:

"Of course, my friend, I shall be glad to see you at any time. Come to my office at noon, to-morrow. I wish to hear, you know, how it happened that he was spared to you."

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Then, as the blond stranger disappeared, Gwendolen closed the library door with a bang, and turned frowningly toward a charming society girl, who looked at that moment as if she had been playing college football in a dinner-costume.

"Who is that woman, father? I insist upon knowing who she is!"

Old Ogden giggled as he turned his back to his outward seeming.

"Do up my gown behind, will you, Gwen?" he said, shrilly. "I'm tired of feeling like a remnant. What was that you said to her? Who has been spared to her? What did you mean by that?"

"She thought he was dead," remarked the girl, in her father's dreariest tones; "but he has come back to her."

"Great Scott! You don't mean it! Well, well, well!" piped the old man, excitedly.

"Stand still, will you, father?" grumbled Gwendolen, crossly. "If you don't keep quiet, I'll never get this gown fastened. You look like a fright, and it's getting late. Do you hear me, father? You must keep quiet."

VI

Old Ogden, in the outward seeming of his daughter, had carried himself very presentably during the earlier courses of the dinner. Gwendolen, as she gazed at herself from the further end of the board, was pleased to realize that nature had endowed her with a beautiful face and a clever father. That fate or electricity or Oriental magic had temporarily brought these two blessings together, depriving her of both of them at the same moment, did not at first tend to lower her spirits. In the rôle of an elderly host, surrounded by young people, she was not called upon to make much of an effort to be sociable, and the stimulating hope grew stronger within her soul, as time went by, that the evening would pass off without any awkward mishap. The Marmaduke Mortimers rattled on in their usual jolly manner; Teddy Langdon made a feeble jest now and again, endeavoring, between times, to flirt with old Ogden, whose coquettish smile gave Gwendolen an attack of what she grimly called to herself *mal-de-père*. Evelyn de Peyster was the most annoying feature of the evening to the girl. She would insist on talking to Richard Ogden, as she supposed, about matters concerning which Gwendolen knew little or nothing.

"I don't understand the subject at all, Mr. Ogden," Miss de Peyster had remarked, referring to trusts. "Won't you explain to me what you do first? How do you begin to form a trust?"

Gwendolen strove to lower her father's voice to a confidential whisper, as she answered:

"There are several good recipes, Miss de Peyster. But the very first step, of course, is to——"

"You are trying to make Mr. Ogden talk shop, Evelyn," cried Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer, reproachfully. "It's very bad form."

"Listen!" exclaimed old Ogden, putting up a white hand, an expression of mingled fear and hope coming into his daughter's beautiful face. "I thought I heard thunder. Listen!"

"'Twas but the wind or a car rattling o'er the stony street. 'On with the dance!'" quoted Teddy Langdon, flippantly.

"My—daughter is so nervous about thunder-storms," remarked Gwendolen, and her father, had he been listening attentively, might have recognized a note of anger in his own voice as it came to him across the table.

"So am I," confessed Mrs. Mortimer, vivaciously. "And as for Marmaduke, they simply terrorize him."

"What nonsense, my dear," protested Mortimer. "What you take for terror is merely my enthusiasm for noise. I always did love a racket, and thunder just about fills the bill. But as for taking thunder-storms seriously——"

"Just wait until one of the right kind hits you," cried old Ogden, excitedly, at the top of Gwendolen's

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voice; "then you'll take it seriously, mark my words."

The diners were gazing at their hysterical young hostess with thinly veiled astonishment.

"My—er—daughter," Gwendolen hastened to explain, in her father's most pompous manner, "has been, from a child, peculiarly flighty when the subject of thunder-storms happened to come up. You must pardon her, my friends. It is, so to speak, hereditary. Her mother and grandmother were both that way."

"It's strange how things like that run through families," commented Teddy Langdon, thoughtfully. "Now, you may not believe it, but I'm afraid of ghosts. It's a Langdon trait. You see, we have a family ghost!"

"What color is it?" piped old Ogden, excitedly, and Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer glanced at Evelyn de Peyster. Could it be possible that Gwendolen Ogden had actually taken too much wine?

"There's been considerable disagreement in the family regarding its color," answered Langdon, with exaggerated seriousness. "There are those who say that it is always white, and others who insist that it is sometimes gray."

"It's never black, is it? Is it ever black?" queried Ogden, in Gwendolen's upper register.

"Who ever heard of a black ghost, Gwendolen?" exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer. "They're always white or a light gray."

"Not this season," declared Ogden, emphatically.

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, fearing that her father's excitement would lead him too far.

"Don't chide her, Mr. Ogden," protested Mrs. Mortimer. "Gwendolen is an authority on fashions, you know. If she says that black ghosts are really coming in, it must be so."

There was a gleam of parental defiance in Gwendolen's eyes, as her father glanced at his forbidding face across the board.

"There's a good deal in it," cried old Ogden, with a sweeping gesture of his daughter's slender hand. "Gwen—that is, father and I saw a black ghost to-day."

"Isn't that exciting! Tell us about it, Mr. Ogden," exclaimed Miss de Peyster, believing that she was smiling at her host.

"My daughter has the floor," remarked Gwendolen, in the basso of despair. "She will tell you the tale."

"You see," went on Richard Ogden, with all his daughter's customary vivacity, "you see, father and I were in the library this afternoon, when a little thunder-storm came up——"

"A thunder-storm!" exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer and Teddy Langdon, simultaneously.

"Didn't it, father?" piped Ogden, defiantly. "I'll leave it to my father; if it wasn't a thunder-storm, what was it?"

"You're right, daughter; it was a thunder-storm," growled Gwendolen, reluctantly.

"I am credibly informed," went on the old man, looking very beautiful at the moment, "that the atmospheric disturbance was not general. I have called it a storm. It was really nothing more than a flash and a clap, with, so far as I have been able to ascertain, no rain."

"Curious," commented Marmaduke Mortimer.

"While the storm was at its height," continued the narrator, apparently a charming young woman, bent upon making the most of a good story, "there appeared in the library a tall, patriarchal-looking old man, as black as your hat."

"Did you hear him enter, Miss Ogden?" queried Langdon, eagerly.

"Hear him enter?" shrilly. "Well, rather! He came in with a crash, and went out with a bang. Didn't he, father?"

"He did, indeed," admitted Gwendolen, in a voice that sounded like a groan.

"He came and went in fire and noise," went on her father, inspired by the eager curiosity in the faces of his

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guests. "His voice sounded like a terrific explosion."

"He spoke to you, then?" cried Teddy Langdon.

"Gwendolen!" exclaimed Miss Ogden, using her father's voice warningly.

"He talked to us in a language that we didn't understand," answered Mr. Ogden, fibbing in falsetto, much to his daughter's relief.

"How very strange!" murmured Miss de Peyster.

"How did he get away?" asked Mrs. Mortimer. "More fireworks, I suppose."

"It was all so sudden and terrifying," answered Ogden, showing Gwendolen's teeth in a kind of apologetic smile, "that I've forgotten many details of the affair. But, I can assure you that father and I were very glad to have him depart."

"And you couldn't identify the tongue he spoke, Miss Ogden?" queried Langdon, with great solemnity.

"I'm sure that it was Oriental," answered the old man, a note of weariness in Gwendolen's voice. He had grown tired of mingling truth and falsehood for the entertainment of his guests. "Shall we adjourn to the smoking-room for our coffee and liqueur?"

"Do you think it will be safe?" cried Mrs. Mortimer, vivaciously, as she arose from her seat. "Does your black ghost, Gwendolen, confine his visits to the library?"

"I really don't know, my dear Mrs. Mortimer," answered Ogden, with a nervous giggle, as his daughter, limping slightly from a twitch of rheumatism, led the way to the smoking-room. "If he continues to haunt our house, I shall be forced either to get out an injunction, or have our electric batteries taken out."

Mrs. Mortimer glanced at the speaker, in undisguised astonishment. That Gwendolen Ogden was both independent and original she had always known, but that the girl was actually eccentric had come to her this evening as a startling revelation.

Teddy Langdon, as the party crossed the drawing-room, had managed to take Mrs. Mortimer's place beside, as he supposed, the beautiful Miss Ogden.

"You have not forgotten your promise, Gwendolen?" he murmured, in a voice that had in it a curious mingling of assurance and appeal.

"My memory, sir, is considered very good," said old Ogden, nervously. "But—this promise to which you refer——"

"The wicked little flirt!" remarked Langdon, to himself. Then, making eyes at the girl's flushed face: "We were to have a tête-à-tête after dinner. You gave me your word for that, Gwendolen."

"But I've got to have a smoke," protested the old man, very much in the voice and manner of a spoiled child.

"I didn't know that you had taken to cigarettes, Gwendolen," remarked the youth, coldly. "If you have, of course, I'm done for. You'd rather smoke than talk to me."

Mr. Ogden laughed aloud, hysterically.

"My dear young man," he piped, Gwendolen's face wearing an amused smile, "if you fear tobacco as a rival, I don't see how you can expect to get very far in—er—what shall I call it?—your favorite pursuit."

"What the deuce has happened to the girl?" Langdon asked himself, as they entered the smoking-room. "If I hadn't seen that she didn't touch a drop of wine at dinner, I should actually believe that Gwendolen Ogden had been drinking."

VII

THE smoking-room of Richard Ogden's luxurious home was a fascinating apartment, upon which Gwendolen had exercised much good taste and ingenuity. Her idea at the outset had been to combine gorgeousness with comfort, to make the room both stimulating to the mind and restful to the body. The high colors of the hangings and coverings were blended har-

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moniously, and there was no divan or chair in the room not adapted to the comfort of the most indolent of idlers. Hookahs, pipes, cigars, cigarettes and all the miscellaneous paraphernalia that add to a smoker's contentment, were there in profusion. It was in its entirety a splendid shrine, worthy of the great god Tobacco.

"It's like jumping from New York into the Orient, without the discomforts of a journey," remarked Mrs. Mortimer, reclining on a divan, and lazily lighting a cigarette. "Aren't you smoking this evening, Mr. Ogden?" she asked, glancing at Gwendolen, who was moodily weighing the question as to how to avoid her father's customary after-dinner cigar without causing comment.

"It's just the place for a tale from 'The Arabian Nights.' You should have deferred the story of your black ghost, Miss Ogden, until we had settled ourselves in this little corner of the immemorial East," remarked Marmaduke Mortimer, puffing a cigar, and gazing at Mr. Ogden, whose daughter's dark beauty had been enhanced by the rich colorings of his present environment.

"Hark!" cried the old man, thrusting Gwendolen's fair right hand straight upward through a thin cloud of smoke. "Did you hear anything? Listen! Doesn't that sound like distant thunder?"

"How nervous you are to-night, Gwendolen," whispered Teddy Langdon to Mr. Ogden, making eyes at the girl in his most flirtatious way.

"Whose fault is it?" queried the old man, petulantly blowing a cloud of cigarette-smoke from Gwendolen's dainty mouth. "I don't wish to be harsh or unjust toward you, but think of the day I've had. What with that thunder-storm and Jeannette, and—well, never mind her name—and getting dressed, and everything, who wouldn't be nervous? Don't look at me like that, young man. Do you think this is the Eden Musée? I'm not a wax figure, am I?"

"No; you're just the sweetest, most beautiful, most fascinating, most tantalizing girl in the world, Gwendolen Ogden."

"Sir!" cried the old man, shrilly, tossing his half-finished cigarette into an ash-receiver, and striving ineffectually to get to Gwendolen's feet. But Teddy Langdon, noting that the Marmaduke Mortimers were laughing merrily at something that Evelyn de Peyster had said to Mr. Ogden, as they supposed him to be, was not to be easily deprived of his flirtation.

"I beg of you, Gwendolen," murmured the young man, seizing a fair hand that old Ogden longed to clench; "I beg of you, my dear girl, to be more patient with me. Have you no memory, no pity, no heart? Why should you treat me this way, after all that has happened in the happy, happy past?"

Old Ogden sat motionless, almost overpowered by a thought that changed him from a querulous old man into an amateur actor, or actress, as you choose. He looked at that moment like a handsome, high-bred girl, who had grown somewhat pale in her effort at self-control.

"What has happened in the happy, happy past, Teddy?" whispered the old man.

"Forgive me, Gwendolen, for my words," pleaded the youth, cleverly. "It was my egotism, of course, that made me believe that—that——"

"Believe what, Teddy?" purred Ogden, sweetly.

"That made me believe, Gwendolen, that you were not indifferent to my love for you," explained Langdon, pressing with eloquent fervor the hand he held. "Tell me, have I deceived myself? Is it true, Gwendolen, that you have only been flirting with me; that all you had in mind was another scalp to add to your already overloaded belt?"

"Look here, young man," exclaimed Ogden, in a petulant tone, withdrawing his daughter's hand from Langdon's clasp, "you seem to imply, sir, that my daughter—that—that I am—a heartless coquette, going about

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seeking whom I may devour. The idea is shocking to me, sir, in—in my present nervous state. If there is any basis of truth in your accusation, young man— Hark! is that thunder? Listen, Teddy, that's a good boy. Did you hear a kind of distant rumble?"

"My dear girl," murmured Langdon, repentantly, "I'm so sorry that I annoyed you. I should not have said what I did. I was unkind and thoughtless and selfish. I realized at dinner that you were not yourself."

"What's that?" asked Ogden, sharply, an expression of dismay, almost horror, coming into Gwendolen's mobile face. "Not myself? What do you mean by that?"

"How flighty and queer you are to-night, Gwendolen," remarked Langdon, more to himself than to the girl. "Have you ever had an attack of nervous prostration?"

"Well, rather! I've had three attacks to-day; and, if I know the symptoms, I'll have several more before midnight. But, if you think I'm not myself, you're mistaken. Appearances may be deceptive, but I'm I—or I'm me—and there ain't enough electricity between here and Mars to change that fact."

Langdon was obviously puzzled by the girl's words and manner. "That's certainly egotism raised to the *n*th power," he remarked, presently, smiling playfully.

"Take it or leave it," snapped Ogden. "Now, what the dickens does that mean?"

His gaze was fixed apprehensively upon James, the butler, who was crossing the smoking-room at that moment, bearing a note to Gwendolen, who, in the outward seeming of her father, had been playing her rôle to perfection.

"What's this, James?" the girl asked, surprise and resentment in her father's voice. That he had disobeyed a standing order by entering the smoking-room on his present errand the butler realized, but he made his apology calmly.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but the young lady has was 'ere this hafternoon, Mr. Ogden, wouldn't take 'no' for a hanswer. She says has 'ow to-morrow mornin' wouldn't do. She's awaitin' your reply, sir, in the drawin'-room."

With every eye in the room upon her, Gwendolen broke open the envelope with her father's fat hands. Her old eyes read the following ominous words:

DEAR RICHARD:

Despite your queer treatment of me this afternoon, I have come to you again. I have no one else to whom I can go for advice. He has not only come back from the dead, but he's raising Cain. Excuse the vulgarity of the above, but, if I don't put the case strongly, I know you'll put me off until to-morrow, and there's only one phrase that can describe the way he is acting. I have actually risked my life to come to you at this time. If you are as good a friend of mine as I believe you to be, you will let me have five minutes' talk with you.

Richard Ogden's face had turned white, as Gwendolen perused these enigmatic words. The note trembled in her father's pudgy fingers, and, as she caught the questioning gaze of her own eyes across the room, her agitation increased.

"No bad news, I trust, Mr. Ogden," remarked Mrs. Mortimer, sympathetically.

"Have you had a line from your black ghost?" asked Miss de Peyster, with ill-timed gaiety.

"No; she's a blonde," muttered Gwendolen, to herself, and the joke served to restore to her her self-control. Getting heavily to her father's feet, and with a murmured apology to her guests, she crossed the room, and handed the note to her father, who giggled like a nervous girl as he received it.

"I think you'd better go to her, my daughter," said Gwendolen, in a despondent basso.

"Not on your life!" cried old Ogden, shrilly, after reading the note. "You see her—er—father, and tell her —well, tell her anything!"

"But," protested Gwendolen, in a

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gruff whisper, thankful that Langdon had been polite enough to move away, "she's in great trouble, perhaps danger. What shall I say to her? I don't even know her name. She signs herself, 'Emily.'"

"That's right," murmured Ogden, in a subdued voice. "Her name's Emily Prentiss. She's a business client of mine. But it makes me nervous to see her when I'm in this—costume. Just use your wits, Gwendolen—that's a good girl—and go in and talk to her like a father. She wants advice. Give it to her by the yard. Tell her to poison her superfluous husband, or call in the police and have him arrested for not remaining dead. And, my dear, if you think you hear thunder, let me know at once, will you? Thanks; that's a good girl. Now, go. I can't whisper, in your voice, any longer. It makes me too thirsty, Gwen."

With a somewhat incoherent apology to her guests, the girl, feeling old and weary and very rebellious at the cruel fate that had come to her, strode slowly from the smoking-room. It was as if a tall, portly, well-groomed old gentleman, with a pale, heavy face, had turned his back upon Hope to tread the path of Despair.

"Is anything serious the matter, Gwendolen?" asked Teddy Langdon, anxiously, returning, as he believed, to the girl's side. "Your father looked actually crushed."

"You can't crush him, young man," cried old Ogden, in a kind of angry whistle. "I can tell you, sir, that Richard Ogden has been through the most terrible day of his life, and he's still in the ring, and full of ginger. Do you understand me?"

"Frankly, Gwendolen," answered the young man, with a puzzled smile on his face, "frankly, now, I don't believe I do."

VIII

"RICHARD!" cried the beautiful blonde, springing to her feet, and smiling at the old man through eyes wet with tears.

"Mrs. Prentiss," remarked Gwendolen, coldly, "won't you be seated? I have left my guests, in order to grant you this interview. But I must stipulate that you make it very brief."

"How cold and cruel you are, Richard!" moaned Mrs. Prentiss, sinking into a chair in a hopeless way. "You seem to forget, in this the hour of my greatest need, how often you have told me to come to you, if I were in trouble." Then, the speaker seemed fully to recover her self-control, for she sat erect, dried her eyes, and gazed steadily into what she took to be Ogden's pale, set face.

"It is more for your sake than my own that I have come to you, Richard," she said, coldly and distinctly. "He—my husband—has heard gossip—gossip absurdly unjust to you and me, but it has brought him back to New York, and he's a desperate and unprincipled man. At the risk of my life, I have come to warn you that you must be careful of this man. He refuses to believe me when I tell him that you have been a father to me; that, without your counsel and advice, his desertion would eventually have left me without either means or occupation. He ridicules the idea of a platonic friendship between us. And the worst of it is, Richard," she concluded, in a voice that was unsteady with its weight of tears and fears, "the worst of it is that, despite every precaution I could take, I'm sure he followed me here, and is waiting for me outside your door."

"Is he—is he—armed?" asked Gwendolen, her father's voice indicating her horror at the predicament in which a jealous husband had placed herself and others.

"He carries a revolver, and I know it's loaded, Richard," answered Mrs. Prentiss, wearily. "I am so tired! It has been such a frightful day!"

To Gwendolen's distraught mind, it seemed at that moment as if the mingling of farce and tragedy in the situation would drive her to an outbreak of

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hysteria. A great rage against Mrs. Prentiss swept over her, and she clenched her father's fists in an effort at self-control. Why should this woman come here with her silly tale of a jealous husband, while she, Gwendolen Ogden, was undergoing an ordeal a thousand times more unbearable than anything that her father's fair client had ever been forced to endure? A frightful day, indeed! A day during which a beautiful, light-hearted girl had lost, at one stroke of fate, her beauty, her light-heartedness, her youth, her health; to receive in their place ugliness, depression of spirits, old age and rheumatism. What was the unexpected return of an unwelcome husband compared with the affliction that had befallen Gwendolen Ogden? Having a jealous husband was infinitely preferable to being one's own father!

But this was no time for vain regrets or unavailing comparisons. Something must be done at once, or crime might follow, fleet of foot, in the track of misfortune. Gwendolen, struggling to keep in mind all the factors of the problem before her, said curtly, in her father's most energetic tones:

"Describe your husband to me, Mrs. Prentiss."

"He is tall, clean-shaven, dark eyes, well-dressed, slightly intoxicated."

Gwendolen touched a button, and, as the butler entered the room, assumed her father's most imperious manner.

"James," she said, "it is possible that within the next half-hour a tall, well-dressed, clean-shaven man, with dark eyes, and—a trifle intoxicated, may call here. If he does, refuse him admission. If he makes the slightest disturbance, threaten to call the police. Do you understand me, James?"

"Very good, sir. Hi'll see to hit, Mr. Ogden."

"And now, Mrs. Prentiss," said Gwendolen, after the butler's exit, rather enjoying, for a moment, the power to take radical action that her father's outward seeming conferred upon her, "now, I want you to remain here for five minutes. I wish to give further orders in this matter, and shall return to you, presently."

Recrossing the drawing-room as rapidly as her father's portly figure permitted, Gwendolen entered the smoking-room, restraining, by a great effort of will, all outward evidence of her inward turmoil.

"Gwendolen," she said, in Mr. Ogden's most dignified manner, "may I ask you to come with me for a moment? I'm sure that our guests will be lenient in this matter. I shall detain you but a short time, my daughter."

As father and daughter came to a standstill in a far corner of the great drawing-room, the former asked, in Gwendolen's most troubled tones:

"What, in the name of goodness, has happened, girl? Is Emily still here? Couldn't you persuade her to go?"

"Her husband is outside our front door with a gun," groaned Gwendolen. "If she goes out, he'll shoot her. If he gets in, he'll shoot me—thinking I'm you. It's a case of the devil and the deep sea, father."

"Don't call me, 'father.' It's a bad habit, and may make trouble," said Ogden, peevishly. "Confound the man! Why didn't he stay dead? If we telephone for the police, it means publicity; and that's the last thing on earth that you and I wish, my dear. If we keep Emily—I mean Mrs. Prentiss—here, the man's anger will lead him to do something desperate. And the Mortimers and the rest of 'em—how are they going to leave the house without risking their lives? It's a hopeless situation, isn't it? I say, isn't it a hopeless situation?" Then, a thought, that brought a flash of sunshine into Gwendolen's beautiful face, came into the old man's mind. "If I could only persuade that asinine young Langdon to go home now!" he murmured, softly. "There's a fair chance that Prentiss might put a bullet through him, and then run away. That wouldn't be so bad, would it?"

"What are you saying to yourself, my daughter?" asked Gwendolen,

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gruffly and impatiently, realizing that there was but little time left to them for choosing their course of procedure.

"Ask Langdon to come here at once, will you?" said the father; and Gwendolen strode heavily toward the smoking-room, astonished at the command, but too agitated mentally to discuss with him the desirability of the step that he was taking.

Teddy Langdon, as he crossed the drawing-room in step, as he supposed, with Mr. Ogden, was struck by the look of worry and depression in Gwendolen's face as the head of the house greeted them with a wan smile.

"If I were in sore trouble and great danger, Teddy Langdon, what would you be willing to do for me?" cooed Ogden, making eyes at the young man in a way that filled Gwendolen's soul with impotent rage.

"Anything — everything, Gwendolen," answered the youth, bravely and emphatically. "You are in trouble; you need my help; my life is at your disposal, Gwendolen. What can I do for you?"

"Listen attentively, my—er—dear boy," went on Ogden, in his daughter's sweetest tones. "There's a tall, dark, smooth-shaven, intoxicated man outside the house, with a gun. He's anxious to put a bullet through dear papa. Now, if somebody could persuade him that dear papa is not—that kind of a man, you know—that is, that dear papa doesn't desire to be shot, don't you see—er—Teddy, how nice that would be?"

Young Langdon had grown white around the mouth, but his eyes were steady as he gazed fondly into Gwendolen's flushed face, and said:

"If you ask me to speak to the fellow, Gwendolen, it will give me great pleasure to do as you wish." Then, he turned to Mr. Ogden's outward seeming, and asked:

"Have you ever seen this man, sir? Is he a very desperate character?"

Gwendolen was too much torn by conflicting emotions to answer at once. She realized that it was not fair to force Teddy Langdon to risk his life in this affair. On the other hand, it might be that there was no great danger, after all. Why should Mr. Prentiss shoot a stranger, against whom he could have no grudge, simply because that stranger had been a guest of Richard Ogden? And, if Teddy Langdon did not make the attempt to drive this desperate man away for the night, who was there left upon whom they could call? Marmaduke Mortimer was a great gossip, and James, the butler, a great coward. To summon the police meant publicity. By a process of elimination, Gwendolen was forced to the conclusion that Teddy Langdon had become their only hope at this complicated, but very threatening, crisis.

"I have never seen this person, Mr. Langdon," she said, presently, "but I have reason to believe that he's a very bad man. You mustn't leave the house without a revolver. Just wait here a moment. There's a six-shooter in the library. I'll get it for you, and return here at once."

Before Ogden could attempt to check his daughter's impetuosity, she had carried his portly form half-way across the drawing-room, hurrying toward the library.

"Are you going to faint, Gwendolen?" cried Langdon, springing, as he supposed, toward the girl.

"If I could have just one little high-ball, I think I could stand the strain," giggled the old man, nervously. "Tell James to come here, will you, Teddy? That's a good boy," he cooed, sinking into a chair, as Langdon, puzzled and distraught, hurried across the room in search of the butler.

IX

"RICHARD! Richard! you have come back to me? How glad I am!"

As Gwendolen hurriedly entered the library, Mrs. Prentiss sprang to her feet, her pale, clear-cut face showing the relief she felt at the old man's return.

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"I'll be with you only a moment," remarked the girl, in the gruffest tones. "Sit down again, and keep perfectly cool, Mrs. Prentiss."

"Cool!" exclaimed the beautiful woman, rather tartly, falling back into her chair. "You're cool enough for both of us, Richard. You're like ice. What are you looking for?"

Gwendolen, to whom her father's hands were still a kind of clumsy mystery, was fumbling awkwardly with a miscellaneous collection of odds and ends that had come together in the drawer of the library-table. Presently, she found the revolver that she sought, and clasped it with fat fingers that trembled slightly.

Mrs. Prentiss, who had been watching the old man closely, was on her feet again at once, and, presently, Gwendolen felt the clutch of a slender, nervous hand on her father's arm.

"What are you going to do with that pistol, Richard?" whispered Mrs. Prentiss, her big blue eyes gazing down in affright at the gleaming weapon. "Put it back where you found it, I implore you! You'll only make matters worse, if you go hunting for Tom. He's a dead shot, Richard. He's a Kentuckian, you remember."

Gwendolen drew away from the pale and excited speaker, and dropped, rather limply, into a chair, holding the revolver gingerly at her side. She felt faint and hopeless. What chance would Teddy Langdon have against an armed Kentuckian under the influence of whiskey?

"Richard, I insist upon knowing what you have in mind," remarked Mrs. Prentiss, a stubborn note in her voice. "If I came to you for shelter and protection, I certainly had no intention of allowing you to put your life in jeopardy. You must not leave this room with that revolver in your hand."

This was too much for Gwendolen's patience, and she arose clumsily to her father's feet. Rather easily coaxed, the girl—an only child, be it remembered—had never been amenable to coercion. Opposition had always made her stubborn, and, in this instance, the lack of tact displayed by Mrs. Prentiss intensified Gwendolen's natural inclination to have her own way.

"I must leave this room, revolver in hand, at once," remarked the girl. "If somebody gets hurt within the next few moments, it won't be my fault. And Teddy, so far as I know to the contrary, may be a crack shot," she added, half to herself.

"Teddy?" queried Mrs. Prentiss, excitedly. "Who's he?"

Gwendolen paused in her movement toward the door.

"Mr. Langdon has volunteered to confront Mr. Prentiss, and persuade him to take his departure peaceably," she explained, gruffly.

"Teddy Langdon!" cried Mrs. Prentiss, white to the lips. "Good heavens, Richard, he and Tom must not meet! There will be murder done, if they come face to face to-night with revolvers in hand. If I had known that Teddy Langdon was here——"

The sentence remained unfinished.

"What do you know about Teddy Langdon?" asked Gwendolen, in her father's most imperious tones.

Mrs. Prentiss shrugged her shoulders, and smiled.

"I know that he and Tom have a grudge against each other," she answered, vaguely.

"You seem to have a very wide acquaintance, Mrs. Prentiss," remarked Gwendolen, with the manner and voice of an old man made cruel by jealousy.

"Richard!" cried Mrs. Prentiss, reproachfully. "Is it kind of you to choose such a time as this for sarcasm, or worse? Is there—pardon the egotism of the question—is there a good-looking woman in New York who doesn't know Teddy Langdon?"

"H'm!" growled Gwendolen. "Well, he's a man worth knowing, isn't he? He may be soft in spots, but he has courage. I'm inclined to believe that he has the sand to go

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out and put a hole through S. T." There was a suspicion of hysteria in the old man's voice as Gwendolen said this.

"S. T.?" queried Mrs. Prentiss, nervously.

"Superfluous Tom," explained the girl, curtly. "Do you imagine, Mrs. Prentiss, that the present situation can be allowed to last an hour longer? As I understand it, we are besieged in our own house by an intoxicated Kentuckian who knows how to shoot to kill. What chance would I stand if I went out to talk to your husband? But it is more than possible that Mr. Prentiss will be willing to hold a peaceful parley with Mr. Langdon."

"Parley with Teddy Langdon?" cried Mrs. Prentiss, rather wildly. "You don't know Tom. He didn't understand how to argue, even when we were first married. He's the most unreasonable man that ever lived, and, as for his holding a debate with Teddy Langdon, that's absurd. The only arguments he'll use are made of lead." There was a sob in the speaker's voice and tears in her fine eyes as she added: "I beg of you, Richard, not to give that revolver to Mr. Langdon."

At that moment, the library was invaded by a flighty young woman, talking in a shrill falsetto and followed closely by a white-faced young man, who was vainly endeavoring to conceal his inward agitation.

"You must have something to steady your nerves, young Langdon," Ogden was saying, emphatically. "What has become of James, I don't know. But never mind. There's something besides books in this room, my boy. Great Scott, what's all this? Emily! Gwen—or, rather, father, where did you get that gun? For heaven's sake, keep it quiet, will you? It'll go off, if you aren't careful. The thing's loaded, don't you know?"

"Don't be so nervous, my daughter," growled Gwendolen, annoyed at her father's excited bearing. "Here, Mr. Langdon, take this revolver. You may find it useful later on."

"Don't you touch the infernal thing, Teddy," piped Ogden, after the manner of a spoiled child, waving Gwendolen's hands wildly in the air. "If you take that pistol from father, I won't give you a high-ball. So there, now!"

"But, Gwendolen," argued his daughter, still thrusting the weapon toward the reluctant Langdon, "he mustn't go into the street unarmed. This Mr. Prentiss is a bad man from Kentucky, and he has been drinking. I'm sorry I haven't a Gatling gun to give you, Mr. Langdon."

"Take the pistol, Teddy," cried Ogden, excitedly. "Anything for a quiet life!

"And now," he went on, with great animation, handling Gwendolen's skirts with considerable skill as he tripped toward the locker, "now we'll fortify our brave defender against the insidious inroads of the white feather. Cartridge and ball, eh, Langdon?"

With surprising deftness, Mr. Ogden placed the ingredients for a stimulating mixture upon the library-table, the while his companions watched him silently, admiring the young girl's grace and beauty, but not altogether pleased with her occupation.

"Strike her up!" piped old Ogden, presently, pointing with Gwendolen's dainty hand toward a bottle of Scotch and a siphon of vichy. "Strike her up! High-ball!" Then, he giggled hysterically at his own facetiousness.

Langdon, nothing loath, poured out his drink.

"And now, Emily—I mean, Mrs. Prentiss, may I—?" began Mr. Ogden, glancing with his daughter's sad, dark eyes at the beautiful blonde.

Before Mrs. Prentiss could put her refusal of this eccentric young woman's invitation into words, James, the butler, pale and overwrought, had rushed into the library.

"'E's in the 'all, sir," he gasped, gazing at Gwendolen, thinking that he addressed his master. "'Ow 'e got hin, Mr. Ogden, I cawn't say. But 'e's there, and 'e says as 'ow 'e must see you hat once, sir."

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"To whom do you refer, James?" asked the girl.

"The tall, dark man as 'as been walkin' hup and down hin front f the 'ouse, sir, for an hour. 'E's wery gentlemanly, Mr. Ogden, but, hif hi may take the liberty, 'e 'as been drinking, sir."

"Put him out of the house, James!" ordered Gwendolen, curtly, waving her father's fat hand toward the hall. "If he won't go quietly, you'll be obliged to throw him out."

"That won't do at all, father," cried Ogden, shrilly, leaning back in a chair and kicking nervously at the air with his daughter's dainty feet. "A good butler is hard to find in these days, and James is very satisfactory."

"Thank you, miss," said James, gratefully. "Hif you'll hexcuse my hegotism, so to speak, sir," he added, turning, as he supposed, toward Mr. Ogden, "hi'm not fit to die, sir."

"And I don't dare to go to him!" remarked Mrs. Prentiss, apologetically, but with emphasis.

"He'd shoot me on sight, of course," mused Gwendolen, in melancholy tones.

"It's up to me, I guess," admitted Teddy Langdon, not very cheerfully.

Suddenly, Gwendolen was struck by an inspiration. She stood erect, her father's face flushed, and a note of excitement in his voice, as she said:

"There seems to be but one person in the room who can confront this dangerous intruder in perfect safety. Wild though he may be, he is, in a way, a gentleman. I have no doubt that—my daughter could go to him with impunity. I suggest, my dear Gwendolen, that you step into the hall at once, and request this Mr. Prentiss to depart in peace."

"Me?" exclaimed old Ogden, in a startled whistle, that suggested a young girl attacked by asthma and hysteria at the same moment. "What do you think of that, Emily? Thomas wouldn't do a thing to me, would he?"

"You forget yourself, my daughter," remarked Gwendolen, in a deep, chiding voice. "I am amazed at you, my child. Where do you pick up so much slang?"

"That's neither here nor there," answered her father, in a sulky falsetto. Then, it came to him, clearly enough, that in Gwendolen's outward seeming he would be in no great danger from Mr. Prentiss. Springing to his dainty feet, and waving his white hands in the air with a gesture that had become a habit with him, the old man cried:

"Come on, Teddy! We'll face this bold, bad man, and ask him sternly why he didn't stay dead. I'll buy thy flowers, Tommy Prentiss! Come on, Teddy! I'll lead the charge, and you come up on my left flank with the light artillery. Confound these skirts! They're an awful nuisance to heavy infantry going into action. Attention, company! Forward, march! Charge!"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, sternly; but it was too late to restrain the reckless old man, who was hurrying toward the hall, followed by Teddy Langdon.

"Are you going to faint, Richard? You look very pale," murmured Mrs. Prentiss, approaching Gwendolen, solicitously.

"Don't mind me," growled the girl, despairingly. Then, she thrust a pudgy hand straight into the ai . "Listen!" she groaned, apprehensively. "Listen!"

X

"Isn't it horrible, Richard? What do you think will happen?"

"Listen!" groaned Gwendolen, gazing down hopelessly at her father's large feet. "If anything awful happens, Mrs. Prentiss, I shall never f rgive myself. I should always feel like a parricide."

"A 'parricide,' Richard?" cried Mr. Ogden's beautiful client, with a nervous little laugh. "I had always believed that you were an orphan."

"I am," growled Gwendolen, recollecting herself, or, rather, her father.

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"Sit down! You make me nervous. What are you doing here, James?"

From a far corner of the library, within which he had vainly sought to escape observation, issued the butler—a withered flower, a collapsed balloon, no longer either ornamental or useful. Even his beautiful calves seemed to have shrunk in his effort to avoid notice. His cheeks and lips were white, his eyes restless, his haughty, self-confident bearing nothing but a memory of his splendid past.

"Are you ill, James?" asked Gwendolen, in the stateliest manner.

"Hif you'll permit me to say so, Mr. Ogden," faltered the butler, "hi'm not hup to much, sir. This 'as been a wery exhausting day, sir."

"Go to the hall at once, James," ordered Gwendolen, sharply. "You may be needed there at any moment."

As the collapsed flunkey left the library with reluctant tread, Mrs. Prentiss watched his retreating figure, smilingly.

"You really can't blame him, Richard," she remarked, very justly, "for his unwillingness to return to his duties."

"I don't blame him," growled the girl, annoyed at the realization that she was inclined to lose her temper. "Upon what did you base your accusation, Mrs. Prentiss? What made you imply that I blamed him?"

"You are so queer to-night, Richard," remarked old Ogden's caller, restlessly. "Frankly, I don't feel at ease with you. You haven't been at all like yourself to-day. Won't you tell me, Richard, what's the matter with you?"

"Listen!" exclaimed Gwendolen, in a hoarse whisper. "Do you hear voices?"

"Not a sound, Richard," answered Mrs. Prentiss, presently. "The house is absolutely quiet."

"But there must be something doing," argued the girl, glaring down, with angry eyes, at her father's pudgy hands. "It isn't likely that Teddy Langdon and—my daughter, are attempting to reform your husband by silent prayer."

"The suspense is awful," murmured Mrs. Prentiss, nervously, jumping to her feet and impulsively drawing near, as she supposed, to Mr. Ogden, a frightened woman craving a man's protection.

"Isn't there something more to be done, Richard?" Her hand rested appealingly upon the old man's shoulder, and Gwendolen allowed it to remain there, too worried and distraught to resent a liberty taken by a comparative stranger.

At that instant, Evelyn de Peyster, closely followed by the Marmaduke Mortimers, hurriedly entered the library.

"I—I beg your pardon," faltered Miss de Peyster, blushing with embarrassment.

"We owe you an apology, Mr. Ogden," said Mr. Mortimer, stepping forward in an effort to relieve the situation, "but it is getting late, and we decided to—to——"

"To take time by the forelock," added Mrs. Mortimer, with great presence of mind. "And we seem to have succeeded in doing it," she murmured, under her breath. Her keen eyes had noted the siphon of vichy and the bottle of whiskey on the table.

Gwendolen, realizing that her father's rheumatism was growing worse, had managed to stand erect, striving to regain sufficient courage to confront this unexpected crisis with the boldness that alone could deprive the situation of its unbearable awkwardness. To this end, she unconsciously exaggerated her father's most pompous manner.

"You are mistaken, Mr. Mortimer," she said, in a very impressive basso. "The apology is due, not from you to me, but from me to you. You will permit me, I trust, to explain. But, first, Mrs. Mortimer, Miss de Peyster and Mr. Mortimer, allow me to present you to Mrs. Prentiss, a client of mine who has been forced to come to me to-night for advice and protection."

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"Delighted!" murmured Miss de Peyster, sarcastically.

"Charmed!" cried Mr. Mortimer, glancing admiringly at the beautiful Mrs. Prentiss.

"I congratulate you, madame," remarked Mrs. Mortimer, suavely, "upon your choice of a counselor. Mr. Ogden's advice is always of the best."

"Hark! what's that?" exclaimed Gwendolen, hoarsely.

"Look here, Ogden," cried Marmaduke Mortimer, "you're in trouble. We're not merely your guests of an evening—we're old friends, entitled to your confidence. Why won't you be frank with us? If we can be of any use to you at this time, you should not hesitate to enlist our services, old man."

"You are very kind, Mortimer," Gwendolen managed to say, gratefully. "If you'll seat yourselves here in the library for a few moments, you will do me a favor. I'll explain the whole affair to you, presently. Meanwhile, if you'll postpone your departure for a time, I shall be under great obligations to you."

There came the sound of swishing skirts from the drawing-room, and a white-faced, dark-haired girl rushed into the library, slamming the door behind her, and turning the key in the lock.

"Saved!" cried old Ogden, in hysterical falsetto, waving Gwendolen's hands triumphantly in the air, as he leaned against the closed door, in appearance a frightened maiden beginning to smile as the realization became clear that a place of safety had been reached. "Your Tom, Emily," he went on, shrilly, "is about the worst that ever happened. I don't blame you for running away from him. He's the——"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, in a deep, chiding basso. "Gwendolen, you forget yourself!"

"Hark!" piped Ogden, hysterically; "is that thunder? Did any of you hear thunder?"

"Gwendolen!" repeated the girl, limping toward her father.

"Drop it, will you?" cried the old man, in his daughter's most petulant tone. "I've reached the limit, here and now!" With that, he seized his skirts, and tripped hastily toward the library-table, unconscious of, or indifferent to, the glances of amazement cast upon him.

"Just two fingers, with lots of fizz-water," he babbled, girlishly, deftly mixing the stimulant.

"Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble
Disappear with a high-ball double,"

he piped, gaily, showing Gwendolen's beautiful teeth to his astounded guests, as he replaced the long glass, empty, upon the table. Then, he flopped into a chair, and tossed a dainty little foot into the air.

"Now, let's hold a council of war, my friends," he cried, in dulcet tones. "Isn't it gratifying, Gwen—I mean, father—how well that high-ball acts? But it's been such a trying day, don't you know! Hey, there, Mortimer, where are you going? Don't you unlock that door, or I'll cut you off my list. That wild-eyed Kentuckian is roaming around the house looking for game. If he gets in here, he'll fill his bag. I'm inclined to think," added the old man, with a girlish giggle, "that he has dropped James, by this time."

"I'm astonished at you, Gwendolen," said his daughter, in the gruffest voice she could control. "Listen to me: What has happened to Teddy Langdon?"

Her father gave vent to a weird peal of hysterical laughter.

"Teddy!" he cried, shrilly. "He was the funniest sight I ever saw! He climbed through a front window, and dropped into the street. He's running still, I suppose. I tell you, Emily, your Kentucky spouse is a dandy. He has an eloquent way of handling a six-shooter that makes you think of a story by Bret Harte. But I wish he were out of the house. We'll have to spend the night here, I fear. And I can't sleep in these infernal skirts, confound 'em! Hark! was that

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thunder? Did anybody hear thunder?"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, both anger and appeal in her gruff tones.

"What does all this mean, Ogden?" exclaimed Marmaduke Mortimer, whose patience had begun to show signs of exhaustion. "Your daughter seems to be—well, hysterical; and you, if you'll pardon my saying so, don't act like yourself. May we not—Miss de Peyster, Mrs. Mortimer and myself—ask the privilege of taking our departure at once?"

"Don't go!" cried Ogden, frantically. "You may think that my daughter—that is, that I'm hysterical; but you're doing me a rank injustice. I am calm. I may not look it, I may not sound it, but I tell you, Marmy, I am calm! Talk about hysteria! You should have seen Teddy Langdon. But I am calm. I have been calm through it all. I might have followed Teddy through the window. I was tempted to. But I remained cool; I recalled my costume. I was calm. I am calm. I shall be calm. Great Scott, what's that?"

A loud, sharp rapping upon the library door echoed with threatening insistence through the room. Old Ogden sank supinely into a chair.

"Speak to him, Emily!" he piped, imploringly, gazing at Mrs. Prentiss. "Tell your Tommy to be calm, will you? Speak to him, for heaven's sake! He'll put a bullet through the keyhole in another minute, if you don't tell him to be calm. Do you hear me, Emily? Speak to him!"

XI

THE Marmaduke Mortimers and Evelyn de Peyster had begun to realize that they had become more or less involved in a mysterious drama, whose plot and *dramatis personæ* had not yet become clearly defined to their startled eyes. The play, in so far as they could follow it, seemed to be a curious mixture of farce, light comedy and heavy tragedy.

The ominous rapping upon the library door had been thrice repeated before Gwendolen, in outward seeming a weary old man at his wits' end, had seen fit to reply to the impatient summons.

"Who's there?" she finally called out, in a basso that had in it a note of anger.

"With your permission, sir," came back the butler's voice, "the helectrical hexpert 'as returned, Mr. Ogden, and 'e says has 'ow 'e's 'ere by happointment."

Old Ogden had sprung to Gwendolen's feet in a state of great excitement. He looked, at that moment, like a beautiful young woman in a high fever.

"Saved!" he cried, in a jubilant treble. "The best butler in New York has escaped the murderous bullets of a bad man from Kentucky!" Tripping hurriedly toward the door, his skirts grasped by one hand while he waved the other in the air, the old man, showing his daughter's teeth in a glad and winsome smile, said, merrily:

"What's become of the man behind the gun, James?"

"With your permission, Miss Ogden, hi've got 'im locked up in the wine-closet. You see, miss, hi bein' the butler, and 'e bein' thirsty, so to speak, hit wasn't difficult to cage 'im."

"Hoop-la!" shouted Ogden, shrilly. "How's that, Emily? Your Tommy locked up in my wine-closet! It'll come high, I guess, before we get him out of there. But he ought to make a night of it on half-a-dozen bottles, don't you think?"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, despair and protest striking the lowest note of the old man's register. Unlocking the door, she said to the butler, whose face was flushed with excitement and triumph, "Ask the electrician if he will kindly wait until we are at leisure, James. Show him into the smoking-room. I'll be with him, presently."

"That's another one on me," grumbled Ogden. "One total stranger has got the run of my wine, and another is to have free access to my cigars! I'm

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glad I didn't give that little French fire-cracker that other ten-dollar bill."

"And now, Richard Ogden," remarked Marmaduke Mortimer, coldly, imagining that he approached his host, "and now, sir, I take it that we are at liberty to depart." Gwendolen smiled, politely.

"Don't go, Marmy," Ogden begged, seizing Mr. Mortimer's hands with Gwendolen's fingers. "It's just the shank of the evening. Let's make a night of it! We've got Mr. Tommy-rot, of Kentucky, locked up in the wine-closet, so there's really no immediate danger. If Mrs. Mortimer——"

"Really, Miss Ogden," remarked Mr. Mortimer, coldly, withdrawing his hands from what seemed to be a young girl's unconventional grasp, "we couldn't think of remaining a moment longer."

"No, Gwendolen, dear," put in Mrs. Mortimer, unable to disguise her annoyance, "we must go at once. And you should retire as soon as possible, my dear girl. You need sleep, badly."

"Sleep!" cried a stunningly handsome brunette, with an old man's dread of insomnia. "How could I sleep with that explosive Enoch Arden locked up in the wine-closet? No, we'll have to make a night of it. If you must go, you'll lose more fun than you've had this season. I shall remain up, and father will chaperon me; won't you, papa? And I'm sure that Mrs. Prentiss will be kind enough to keep us company. Her Tommy will be perfectly harmless inside of half an hour. You see, a Kentuckian always carries a corkscrew."

"Good night, Gwendolen," said Miss de Peyster, sadly, gazing with reproachful eyes at her friend's flushed face. "It has been such a charming evening," she added as she followed the Mortimers from the library.

"I don't like that de Peyster girl," remarked Ogden, turning toward his daughter, who had been saying farewell to the departing guests. "She's sarcastic. But now, Emily—that is, Mrs. Prentiss, and father, let us sit down, and calmly discuss the situation. I'm inclined to think that a very weak high-ball——"

"Not another drop, Gwendolen!" protested his daughter, sinking wearily into a chair, and crossing her father's legs with considerable difficulty. "Won't you be seated, Mrs. Prentiss? Your advice at this crisis will be of great value to us."

"I really fear, Richard," remarked Ogden's fair client, sighing deeply as she seated herself, "that my mind is in too much of a whirl to offer any counsel of value."

"Hark!" cried Ogden, who had also dropped into a chair. "Hark! what's that? It sounds to me like distant thunder."

"You deceive yourself, Gwendolen," growled his daughter, in the voice of a petulant old man. "Now, my advice is this: Let us dismiss the electrician, keep the Kentuckian locked up for the night, and have James escort Mrs. Prentiss to her home. In that way, my daughter, you and I could get some sleep."

"I told you I couldn't sleep," commented her father, with the voice and manner of a belle that was out of tune. "But, daddy, go to bed at once, if you feel so disposed. Em—that is, Mrs. Prentiss and I will sit with the remains, so to speak."

Mrs. Prentiss was gazing at the speaker with puzzled eyes. She had no desire to keep watch and ward with a young woman who seemed to be, to put it mildly, in a very flighty state of mind.

"Listen!" cried old Ogden, shrilly; "whose voices do I hear? Have those infernal Mortimers returned? What does this mean?"

The overwrought trio were on their feet, gazing apprehensively at the library door.

"Hif you please, Mr. Ogden—" began the butler, nervously, as he hurried into the room. But he got no further, for, close upon his heels, came a man with a woman clinging to his arm.

"Teddy Langdon!" whistled Ogden, merrily.

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"Jeannette!" exclaimed Gwendolen, in a kind of amazed groan.

"You see—" began Langdon, apologetically.

"Oh, we see, all right!" cried Mr. Ogden, at the top of Gwendolen's voice. "You've had a large evening, haven't you, Jeannette? Last name doesn't matter. Ten dollars was enough, wasn't it?"

"*Oh, mam'selle! Pardonnez-moi! Je suis très triste. Mais——*"

"You see," recommenced Langdon, gazing appealingly at Miss Ogden, as he mistakenly imagined, "you see, your maid had made a mistake in the street. She was a ship sinking within sight of land."

"Beautiful simile!" exclaimed Ogden, in an enthusiastic treble. "Ten dollars more, and she'd never have seen land. But it's all right, Jeannette! This is the night we celebrate, anyway. We'll all have one little high-ball apiece, eh?"

"*Non! non, mam'selle!*" cried the French girl, horror-stricken or remorseful, it was hard to say which.

"Gwendolen," commanded Ogden's daughter, sternly, "dismiss your maid at once. Don't go, Mr. Langdon. We may need your assistance, presently."

There was a stubborn note in the old man's borrowed falsetto as he said:

"Jeannette isn't sleepy, are you, Jeannette? Be a good girl, now, and you may stay up until the show is over. We're running a continuous performance here to-day, and I'm sure that, with your artistic temperament, you'll appreciate— Hark! what's that? Listen! Oh, it's you again, James! What's the matter now?"

"Hi'm sorry to say, Mr. Ogden," said the butler, ignoring the speaker and addressing Gwendolen, "hi'm sorry to say, sir, that there's a policeman in the 'all. 'E wants to know what's wrong 'ere, sir. 'E says as 'ow 'e saw a man jump out of a front window 'ere, and 'e overheard Mr. Marmaduke Mortimer saying, has 'e got hinto 'is coupé, that there was at least three crazy people in this 'ere 'ouse, Mr. Ogden."

"That's your fault, Teddy Langdon," cried old Ogden, angrily. "You were scared too easily. Didn't you know that the man behind the gun was loaded?"

"Gwendolen!" exclaimed his daughter, protestingly. Then, with her father's sternest manner, she turned to the butler. "Ask the officer to come to us here, will you, James? I wish to speak to him."

"Wery good, Mr. Ogden," replied James, hurrying away.

"What in the world did you do that for, my daughter?" cried Ogden, tempestuously. "Aren't we in trouble enough, as it is, without calling in the police?"

"I wish to have him remove that man from the wine-closet," remarked the girl, with gruff energy, setting her father's jaw, stubbornly.

"Oh, Richard!" cried Mrs. Prentiss, springing forward in alarm. "You must not do this! You mustn't have Tom arrested! I couldn't endure the publicity of it. I beg of you, Richard, be merciful!"

At that instant, the butler, followed closely by a blue-coated patrolman, appeared at the library door.

XII

"WHAT'S wrong here, Mr. Ogden?" asked the policeman, eying the group in the library, with the cold gaze of a man to whom astonishment is impossible.

"You are," answered Gwendolen, gruffly.

"That's one on you, officer," cried Ogden, gleefully. "And—er—my father's quite right. When we need you, we'll send for you."

"My duty's my duty, miss," commented the officer, unwilling to offend the influential Mr. Ogden and his daughter, but anxious to solve the mystery of this disturbed household.

"It's your duty to tend to crime and criminals, officer," remarked Mr.

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Ogden, dropping into a chair, and making an oratorical gesture. "We've had a trying day, but there has been no lawlessness. Jeannette has had a large evening, and I'm not quite myself, but there's no reason why the police should enter the house."

"Beg pardon, miss," remarked the patrolman, deferentially, "but a man left your house recently through a front window. You can't blame me for not liking the look of it."

"The look of it!" repeated old Ogden, in a merry treble. "It was the funniest sight I ever saw!"

"You see, officer," Gwendolen hastened to say, "we were playing a round game after dinner, and one of our guests jumped through the window in his excitement."

The policeman bowed, muttered something that sounded apologetic, and retreated across the drawing-room, followed by James.

"Hi'm sorry, sir, that you've been put to so much hunnecessary trouble, so to speak," remarked the latter, as they neared the front door.

"You'd be surprised, young man," said the patrolman, impressively, delaying his exit for a moment, "you'd be surprised to know what queer things I do see since the nobs took to playin' ping-pong. Good night."

"And now that it's all quiet on the Potomac, my friends," said Ogden, merrily, after the policeman's disappearance, "I suggest——"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, warningly.

"I suggest," continued her father, stubbornly, "that we adjourn to the dining-room for a Welsh rabbit and beer."

"Clever idea, Gwendolen," murmured Teddy Langdon, in the old man's tiny ear. "But can't we have a moment alone together, before I go?"

"Sir!" exclaimed the old man. "I really wish—er—young Langdon, that you'd confine your goo-goo talk to—Jeannette, for instance. Ah, here's James back in the nick of time. James, we're going to the dining-room at once for beer and rabbit. Get everything ready for us."

"Have you forgotten the electrician?" he heard his own voice muttering, in a clumsy whisper.

"I forget nothing," answered the old man. "The table will just balance. Teddy Langdon and Jeannette, you and Mrs. Prentiss, and the electrician and myself. We'll make a night of it, and watch the weather. We may have a thunder-storm before morning, you know."

"But, Jeannette—" protested Gwendolen, in her father's haughtiest tones, subdued but significant.

"She's in the swim to-night all right," whispered the old man, hospitably. "To-morrow morning, I'll snub her to beat the band," he added, soothingly.

As Teddy Langdon, ten minutes later, glanced at the group that had gathered, with forced merriment, around the table, he realized that he was a snob. But he was compelled to admit to himself, presently, that Jeannette possessed a piquant charm, and that the electrician looked and acted like a gentleman.

The only one of the party who was at first frankly and unaffectedly merry was old Ogden. He displayed Gwendolen's stunning teeth in joyous smiles, while her dark eyes danced with delight when he realized that James had made a most eatable rabbit. His complete freedom from rheumatism for many hours had given a zest to life that he had not felt for years.

"Don't look so down-hearted, father," he cried to Gwendolen, after quaffing a stein of beer. "Did you enjoy the evening, Jeannette? Did you blow yourself?"

"*Oui, mam'selle*," answered the French girl, her black eyes bright with many varied emotions.

"It was a great blow," whispered Langdon to old Ogden, wondering what kind of a wife this fascinating, but eccentric, Gwendolen Ogden was likely to make.

"Do you think, Richard, that Tom

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has gone to sleep in the wine-closet?" whispered Mrs. Prentiss to her vis-à-vis.

"I hope he has," she heard an old man answer, wearily. Life had become almost unendurable to Gwendolen Ogden. Her old bones ached, and she craved sleep. "If we ever become readjusted," she found herself repeatedly thinking, "I'll be more considerate of poor father's feelings. He has so much more to endure than I had imagined."

"Is Tom fond of rabbits, Em—I mean, Mrs. Prentiss?" cried old Ogden, hospitably. "It seems too bad to keep him locked up all night, if he's really hungry."

"Ees mam'selle not vare beautiful to-night?" whispered Jeannette in Langdon's ear.

"I'm sure," remarked the latter, addressing Gwendolen, as he supposed, "I'm sure that it would be too bad to have the man starve to death. We might have him in here for a few moments."

"But, Mr. Langdon," remarked Gwendolen, in her father's most sarcastic tones, "James has locked all the windows for the night."

"That's not fair, daughter," protested Mr. Ogden, somewhat hysterically. "It is true that Teddy ran away under fire. But, like Cato, or Catiline, or the cat—he came back. Now, fill your glasses, friends, Romans, countrymen! I am about to propose a toast."

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, apprehensively.

"It's all right, father," the old man assured her. "Here's the toast—with apologies to Em—Mrs. Prentiss:

"There was a young man from Kentucky,
Who went on a hunt for his ducky;
But he didn't his worst
Because of his thirst,
And that was exceedingly lucky."

Even Mrs. Prentiss could not refrain from laughing at the eccentric Miss Ogden's doggerel. Upon the thin, alert face of the electrical expert rested an expression of astonishment that convinced Langdon that the man was not really a thoroughbred. Langdon was inclined to be hypercritical and supersensitive at this moment. His courage was under suspicion, and Gwendolen Ogden had been openly sarcastic regarding his recent escapade. He must redeem himself in the eyes of the girl and the others.

"With your permission, Mr. Ogden," said Langdon, getting to his feet and ostentatiously removing a revolver from his hip-pocket and laying it upon the table, "with your permission, sir, I shall enter the wine-closet, and find out just how this very amusing Kentuckian feels at present. I shall go unarmed."

"Bravo!" cried old Ogden, enthusiastically. "But watch out, Daniel. Lions bite, you know."

"*Non, non, monsieur!*" exclaimed Jeannette, very prettily. "*C'est magnifique mais il n'est pas la guerre. Restez tranquille, s'il vous plaît.*"

"Don't go, Teddy," pleaded Gwendolen, in the most impressive tones.

"I beg of you, Mr. Langdon," cried Mrs. Prentiss, turning her pale face beseechingly up to the rash youth; "I beg of you not to enter the wine-closet. It means deadly peril to you, if you do."

"Don't get scared, Teddy," old Ogden hastened to say, his daughter's face radiant with approving smiles. "Let the wine-closet, my boy, atone for the front window. Have you any last words to leave to us? You are young to die, but, of course, you couldn't go through life with a stain upon your reputation for courage; now, could you?"

Seemingly a target for the bitter gibes of a beautiful young woman, with whom he had fallen deeply in love, Teddy Langdon was a truly tragic figure as he stood there, pale but determined, poised upon the brink.

"There is a stain upon my reputation for courage," he said, coolly, "and it must be wiped out. If I tell you that I jumped through the window to intercept the Kentuckian, thinking that he intended to bolt through the front door, you would laugh at me, Miss

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Ogden, and the rest of you would doubt my word. But, if I enter the wine-closet unarmed, I think that no one afterward could have the audacity to call me a coward."

"Isn't that beautiful?" cried old Ogden, in enthusiastic falsetto, waving a lily-white hand in the air. "Behold King Arthur's round table, groaning beneath its weight of Welsh rabbit and beer, and Sir Lancelot saying farewell as he sets forth in quest of glory and vindication."

"Cruel! cruel! cruel!" muttered Langdon, cut to the heart, as he turned and strode hurriedly across the dining-room.

"Come back! come back, Teddy!" thundered Gwendolen, in her father's loudest and most imperative basso. But Langdon paid no heed to what he thought was an old man's belated behest.

"He'll never come back," purred old Ogden, contentedly sipping his beer. "And there'll be a lot less fool goo-goo talk in this world, if he doesn't."

XIII

"I'm sure that you will pardon me, Mr. Ogden," remarked the electrician, gazing at Gwendolen, whose varied emotions had whitened her father's lips and cheeks, "if I remind you that I am here, by appointment, for a distinct purpose. While I don't object to a rabbit and beer at midnight, I have come to you, sir, not as a guest, but as a specialist."

"I know! I know!" cried the girl, excitedly, trying to keep her father's voice under control. "But I implore you to be patient, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Richardson is my name, Mr. Ogden."

"Mr. Richardson," said Gwendolen, in a hoarse whisper, glancing furtively at her father, who was engaged, at that moment, in a smiling effort to talk French to Jeannette, the while Mrs. Prentiss sat, pale and silent, seemingly awaiting the crack of doom; "Mr. Richardson, I beg of you, I appeal to you as—er—as man to man, to go to Mr. Langdon's assistance. I have reason to believe that he is in deadly peril. If you make haste, sir, you may save his life!"

A flush had come into the thin cheeks of the electrician as he listened to what he thought was an appeal from an old man upon the verge of a nervous collapse.

"From what I have heard, Mr. Ogden," remarked Richardson, slowly, "I understand that a desperate character, under the influence of alcohol, is locked up in your wine-closet. I am also led to believe that the aforesaid desperate character is armed with at least one revolver and, possibly, a bowie-knife. Your daughter, sir, evidently takes it for granted that Mr. Langdon has gone from here to certain death. Under these circumstances, Mr. Ogden, you must admit that it is not at all unreasonable on my part to hesitate before rushing recklessly to Mr. Langdon's assistance. I have a wife and children, sir."

"Then, you must need all the money that you can get," whispered Gwendolen, hoarsely. "If you will go at once to Mr. Langdon's aid, Mr. Richardson, I will give you a thousand dollars. You must decide now. There is no time to lose."

"I'm off!" cried the electrician, springing to his feet, and rushing across the dining-room on the jump.

"Hey, there!" shrieked old Ogden, in amazement. "Come back, young fellow! Do you want to die? Come back, I say! What have you been saying to that man, father? He's an electrician. He's our only hope. Do you want to have him shot?"

"He has gone to save Mr. Langdon's life, my daughter," answered Gwendolen, gruffly, glaring down angrily at her father's pudgy hands.

"*Magnifique!*" cried Jeannette, enthusiastically. "Ze house eet ees full of ze heroes, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"But why did he rush to death so suddenly, father?" persisted the old man, a gleam of suspicion coming into Gwendolen's dark eyes. "What did you say to him?"

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"I offered him a thousand dollars, if he would save Mr. Langdon's life."

"A thousand dollars!" shouted Ogden, in a kind of hysterical shriek, jumping to his dainty little feet. "A thousand dollars! I won't pay it. Teddy's not worth the money. He's too soft. I'll cancel that contract mighty quick, if I can get there in time."

With that, the old man tripped across the dining-room with both agility and grace.

"Come back! come back!" cried Gwendolen, imploringly. "Oh, what shall I do? They'll be killed, and it's all my fault!"

"Be calm, Richard," murmured Mrs. Prentiss, smiling sadly at the speaker; "you are not at all to blame. If anybody is at fault in this matter, I'm afraid that I must plead guilty."

"Yes, you're It!" groaned Gwendolen, wearily. "But that's a matter of no moment just at present. Hark! how very quiet it is! What do you suppose they're doing? James!"

From somewhere at the rear of the room came the butler, a distraught flunkey whose frightened eyes were on his master's face, but whose ears were far away.

"James, you have the key to the wine-closet. Give it to me at once."

"Yes, sir," said the butler, in a dazed way, but making no motion indicating that he had understood the order.

"Listen!" murmured Mrs. Prentiss. "They are talking, are they not?"

"*Parbleu!*" cried Jeannette, restlessly. "Eet ees terreeble—ze suspense."

"The key, James!" cried Gwendolen. "Why do you not obey me? Are you deaf?"

The butler, extracting a key from a waistcoat-pocket, placed it gingerly beside the revolver that Teddy Langdon had left upon the table.

"Hif you'll hexcuse me, Mr. Ogden," said James, firmly, and with a touch of his former hauteur, "hi'll give notice at once, sir. My nerves, so to speak, Mr. Ogden, are not what they were, sir. Hi've tried to do my duty, Mr. Ogden, but I cawn't stand any more o' this chaos, so to speak, sir."

"Very well, James," remarked Gwendolen, getting heavily to her father's feet; "you may go when your month is up."

"But, pardon me, Mr. Ogden—" began the butler, his pale face flushing red.

"That will do, James," said the girl, curtly, bending forward across the table, and grasping the key and the revolver with awkward fingers.

"Richard, Richard!" cried Mrs. Prentiss, springing to her feet. "What does this mean? What are you going to do?"

Glancing down at the revolver in her father's fat hand, Gwendolen smiled, grimly.

"Possibly, I am about to make you a widow, Mrs. Prentiss," she said aloud. To herself, she murmured: "At all events, I'm going to give Teddy Langdon a chance for his life."

"Richard," protested Mrs. Prentiss, seizing Gwendolen by her father's arm, "you must not leave this room! It is madness. You don't know how to handle a revolver; and, if you did, you would stand no chance against Tom."

"Where's James?" came a shrill voice from the further end of the room; and, a moment later, old Ogden appeared at the doorway, a very beautiful young woman in appearance, laboring evidently under great excitement.

"Where's James?" he repeated, waving one white hand in the air as he bore down upon the table, clutching his skirts with the other; "where's James, I say? We want the key to the wine-closet. Listen! Do you hear that, girls? That's Thomas Prentiss, of Kentucky, smashing glass bottles. If we don't get him out of there at once, I won't have a drop of wine left in half an hour. He's the worst that ever happened. Where's James, I say?"

"He resigned his position a few moments ago," explained Gwendolen, gloomily. "He said that your ec-

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centric ways, my daughter, had driven him from the house."

"My eccentric ways!" cried her father, in a shrill treble. "Well, I like that! I'm the only man or woman in the house who has got a ray of sense left. Hark! Prentiss is playing ten-pins with the champagne bottles. He won't listen to reason. We've tried to argue with him through the keyhole, but he insists that we're to blame for locking him up. He's more than half right, perhaps. The only thing to do is to let him out. Where's James, I say? He hasn't left the house, has he?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied Gwendolen, reseating herself at the table, in a despondent way; "but, if you want the key to the wine-closet——"

"That's what I do want," cried her father, impatiently. "Where is it?"

"I have it here," answered his daughter, stiffly. "But I shall give it up on one condition only. If Mrs. Prentiss is willing to release her husband, she can have the key. Otherwise, I shall keep it, and Mr. Prentiss may stay where he is."

"But, Richard—" began Mrs. Prentiss, whose blond beauty had faded perceptibly under the strain and stress of the last hour.

"I think—er—Mrs. Prentiss, that—er—father is quite right," commented old Ogden, at the top of Gwendolen's voice. "Take the key, and follow me! Hurry, now! You can speak to your Tommy through the keyhole before you let him out. Perhaps, that will calm him. Come on, Emily—Mrs. Prentiss. Follow me!"

A moment later, Gwendolen found herself seated with Jeannette alone at the table.

"Monsieur," murmured the French girl, softly, "what ees ze mattaire wiz everybody? And mademoiselle, she ees so vare strange!"

"Will you kindly keep quiet, Jeannette?" grumbled Gwendolen, crossly. "Listen! what was that? More glass, was it not? Go at once, Jeannette, and tell Mr. Langdon to come here. Do you hear me? Don't stare at me like that, but go!"

With a glance of amazement at the outward seeming of Richard Ogden, the French girl reluctantly left the dining-room, and Gwendolen, breathing a hoarse sigh of relief at finding herself, for the first time in many hours, alone with her great sorrow, leaned back in her chair, and gazed with weary old eyes at the richly decorated ceiling above her gray head.

XIV

To Gwendolen Ogden, at that moment, solitude had its drawbacks, as she quickly discovered. Alone and undisturbed, she found her mind dwelling upon the apparent impossibility of the psychical readjustment that she craved. Hopes, based upon the skill of the electrician, should he be placed in full possession of the details of the metempsychosis that had come to her father and herself, she felt were futile. Mr. Richardson, in all probability, could be of no more service to the Ogdens in their present plight than a carpenter or a plumber.

And a revelation had come to the girl, during the evening, that had done much to add to the horror of the cruel fate that had befallen her. She had discovered that the flirtation she had been carrying forward with Teddy Langdon for several months past had affected her heart. Seemingly deprived of all hope of ever being more to him than a friend, Gwendolen had realized, to her dismay, that she had been in love with the man for fully two weeks. How much this self-confession intensified the bitterness of the girl's reverie, it is easy to conceive. To feel the honey-sweetness of love's young dream, while a twinge of vicarious gout is gripping at your toes; to throb with the joy of a self-revelation that comes to a woman but once in her life, while your gray head is aching with the weariness of old age; to know that you belong to another, and to fear that you will never be your-

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self; to long for orange-blossoms and the wedding-march, and to realize that your immediate needs consist of a porous-plaster and a narcotic—is not this to suffer a torture hitherto unprecedented in the history of the race?

What had that dark apparition, seemingly sprung from an Oriental gewgaw, said? "*The decree hath gone forth that ye must change bodies for a season.*" A season! What an elastic phrase that was! In its technical application, it meant three months. But, on the other hand, it could be used to cover a few days, or even a few hours. "*When the time for thy deliverance shall be at hand—*" The whole tenor of the decree, as Gwendolen recalled the fateful words, was to the effect that the soul-transposition involved was not to be permanent; that a limit had been fixed to the strange punishment imposed upon Richard Ogden and his daughter.

"But I can't stand much more of it," moaned Gwendolen, hoarsely, her old eyes fixed upon the door through which, as she fondly hoped, Teddy Langdon was to come to her. And, presently, she saw him enter the dining-room, glancing nervously over his shoulder as he bore down upon her.

"You sent for me, Mr. Ogden?" began the young man, seating himself in the chair that he had recently quitted. "I am glad to come to you, sir. I have something of much importance to myself to say to you, Mr. Ogden."

"But first," interposed the girl, gazing down ruefully at her father's hands, "first tell me, Mr. Langdon, what has happened at the wine-closet. Have they opened the door?"

"Yes," answered Teddy, drumming nervously upon the table for a moment, and then lighting a cigarette. "We found Mr. Prentiss fast asleep on the floor, surrounded by broken glass and a pool of wine. He has been disarmed, and is now perfectly harmless. But, sir, I must change the subject, abruptly. We are sure to be interrupted, and I am in sore need of your advice, Mr. Ogden."

"My advice?" queried the girl, her father's face displaying her surprise.

"Permit me to be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Ogden," went on the young man, rather feverishly. "I don't believe that it will astonish you, sir, if I tell you that I am in love with your daughter. You must have observed, Mr. Ogden, my admiration for Gwendolen. I have never made any effort to disguise my feelings in this matter."

"That's true enough," commented the girl, gruffly. "How long have you been in love with my daughter, Ted—Mr. Langdon?"

"For exactly four weeks, sir," answered the youth, readily. "I went over the links with her at the country club just a month ago to-day, and it came to me, in a flash, at the third tee, that I could never be happy without her."

"Yes, you played wretched golf that day," Langdon, much to his amazement, heard the old man murmur.

"But, Mr. Ogden," went on the young man, "before I ask you for permission to push my suit with Gwendolen, I feel that I owe it to myself to put a few questions to you, as delicately as I can. Frankly, sir, I have been both shocked and mystified to-night."

"In what way, sir?" asked Gwendolen, in her father's haughtiest tones.

Langdon was silent for a time, evidently chilled by Mr. Ogden's unsympathetic manner; but, presently, he said:

"It will sound like a breach of confidence, I fear, sir, if I explain myself in detail. But there is so much at stake in this matter—your daughter's happiness, Mr. Ogden, and mine—that I feel that I must go on."

"My daughter's happiness, Mr. Langdon? How do know that that is involved in what you have to say?"

"It's one of two things, Mr. Ogden," said the young man, stubbornly; "either your daughter loves me, or she is the most unprincipled and heartless flirt that ever broke a man's heart for fun; or, I regret to say, sir, there may be something more to it all."

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"That's interesting," commented Gwendolen, rather pompously, her father's heavy features set in a way that Langdon didn't like. "Explain yourself, sir."

"I accused her, in the smoking-room," admitted Langdon, reluctantly, "of being flighty and queer to-night. I even went so far as to ask her if she had ever had an attack of nervous prostration."

"Did you, indeed?" remarked the girl, in a hoarse murmur; "and what did she answer?"

"Her reply I shall never forget," replied Langdon, excitedly. "This is what she said, Mr. Ogden, word for word: 'Well, rather! I've had three to-day. And, if I know the symptoms, I'll have several more before midnight. But, if you think I'm not myself, young Langdon, you're mistaken. Appearances may be deceptive, but I'm I—or I'm me—and there ain't enough electricity between here and Mars to change that fact.'"

A deep flush came into old Ogden's face, as Gwendolen realized how absurd her father's reckless words must have sounded to Teddy Langdon. But she said nothing, and the young man went on:

"And then, you remember, sir, how her sarcastic gibes drove me to go hunting, unarmed, for that Kentucky desperado. Your daughter, Mr. Ogden, really seemed to be more amused than shocked at the prospect of my sudden death. Is it strange, sir, that I feel the need of your counsel and advice before I go further in this matter? Put yourself in my place, sir——"

"Please don't," implored Gwendolen, hoarsely.

"Don't what?" asked Langdon, in surprise.

"Don't talk like that, Teddy. If you only knew!" Old Ogden's voice died away in a cross between a sigh and a sob.

"But what shall I do, sir?" persisted the young man, lighting a fresh cigarette, and gazing at old Ogden, as he supposed, with gloomy eyes. "I love your daughter passionately, madly, but there is a certain wildness about her to-night that gives me a chill. Tell me, frankly, Mr. Ogden, is she addicted to—that is, I mean, is it acute or chronic?"

"You are taking a great liberty, young man! I am sure, sir, that, if my daughter's words and manner are not pleasing to you, you are at perfect liberty to take your departure."

"Mr. Ogden!" cried Langdon, springing to his feet, his cheeks reddening with anger. "I will say good night to you, sir. I regret exceedingly that I did not take my departure an hour ago."

"Sit down, Teddy," said the girl, in a voice that sounded like a groan. "Don't go!"

Langdon reseated himself, the expression of anger in his face giving place to a look of amazement.

"What does this mean, sir?" he asked, nervously. "Frankly, Mr. Ogden, you are becoming as much of a mystery to me as your daughter."

At that instant, their tête-à-tête was interrupted by the swish of skirts and a petulant treble, as old Ogden, in appearance a bright-eyed, excited maiden, rushed into the dining-room.

"What are you doing here, young Langdon?" cried the old man, hotly. "Are you making a complaint? What has he been saying to you, father? Has he been proposing for my hand? If he has, he can't have it. You may just make up your minds, both of you, that I shall live and die an old maid. Do you understand me, Teddy Langdon? I'm not a candidate for matrimony, and you may roll that up in your next cigarette, and smoke it."

"Gwendolen!" groaned his daughter, tears coming into her aged eyes, as she saw that Langdon was about to take his departure.

"I'll say good night to you again, Mr. Ogden," murmured the latter, bowing stiffly. "I trust, Miss Ogden," he added, turning toward the young woman, whose black eyes were fixed angrily upon his white face, "I trust that you may never regret your very

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eccentric treatment of one whose affection for you is too deep and true to be easily destroyed."

At that instant, the expression upon Gwendolen's beautiful face changed, and old Ogden cried out, in hysterical falsetto:

"Listen! listen! I hear thunder! There's no mistake about it this time! That's thunder, sure! Listen!"

XV

"ANOTHER false alarm!" exclaimed Ogden, in a petulant treble, as he sank into a chair, and waved a beautiful hand in the air. "Who was it defied the lightning? Ajax, wasn't it? Well, Ajax knew his business. I don't. How can I defy the lightning when there isn't any lightning? There isn't even a peal of distant thunder. Teddy's gone, has he? I'm glad of it. I don't like that young man. He makes me tired. What's the matter, my dear? Don't go to pieces like that. 'Tears, idle tears!' You look like an old man in his second childhood, Gwendolen. I object to this hysterical exhibition that you are making of me. Brace up, girl! I have good news for you."

Gwendolen wiped the tears from her father's sad face, and gazed gloomily at a beautiful young woman who was filling a goblet with beer, and smiling gladly at his daughter.

"Things are looking up a bit," remarked old Ogden, hopefully, after he had drained his glass. "That wild man from Kentucky has gone home peacefully with his wife. Score one! Jeannette felt that she'd really made a night of it, and she's gone to bed. Score two! Teddy Langdon has made his exit—this time through the front door—and that's three. And the electrician, Gwendolen, is waiting for us in the smoking-room. Score four! Now, stop sobbing, and come with me. We'll lay the whole matter before Mr. Richardson, and it's just possible that he'll be able to pull us out of this infernal scrape."

"But you seem to have been very happy all the evening, father," remarked Gwendolen, reproachfully, making no effort to get to old Ogden's feet. "I'd like to return to my own body, of course, but why should you wish to be readjusted?"

"Why?" asked her father, shrilly. "How much longer, girl, do you think I can stand this fool costume? And do you imagine that it is pleasant to a man of sense to have that spoony Langdon whispering nonsense into this dainty little ear? The whole thing's absurd, Gwendolen. It isn't wholesome. I'm not easily disturbed, as you know, my dear; but I'm obliged to draw the line somewhere, and I draw it at the supernatural. Now, Gwen, brace up, and come with me to the smoking-room. This electrical expert, Mr. Richardson, may have something up his sleeve. He's mercenary, isn't he? He'll help us out, if money can do it. But you let me do the talking, Gwen. You have no idea of the value of money, my child. Your offer to Richardson of a thousand dollars for Teddy Langdon's life was the most unbusinesslike proposition I ever heard of; let me do the talking."

As father and daughter approached the smoking-room, the deep silence, that had fallen upon a household which had been noisy for hours, weighed heavily upon their spirits. The optimism of old Ogden's recent mood had passed away, and his white hands, as they clutched at his gown, were cold.

"How do you feel, Gwendolen?" he whispered, as they reached the centre of the drawing-room.

"I think I'm scared," answered his daughter, hoarsely; "but maybe it's only rheumatism."

Simultaneously, they had come to a standstill, and now stood gazing at the portière that had been drawn across the entrance to the smoking-room.

"Ah—Mr. Richardson!" called out old Ogden, at the top of his daughter's voice.

"He doesn't answer," muttered Gwendolen, presently. "Why don't you pull the portière, papa?"

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"I don't know," whispered the old man, nervously. "Are you subject to chills, Gwen? I feel very cold."

"Ah—Mr. Richardson!" cried his daughter, in an insistent basso.

"He's dead—or he has deserted us!" exclaimed Ogden, in a despairing falsetto.

Suddenly, all the lights in the house went out, and father and daughter, hand clasped in hand, stood trembling in total darkness. For a moment, no sound reached their straining ears; but, presently, they heard the brass rings of the heavy portière click together, and an imperious voice commanded them to enter.

Stumbling forward, with hands still locked together, old Ogden and his daughter made their way into the smoking-room. In the deep, black gloom, only the faintest outlines of the furniture were visible, and they felt, rather than saw, the tall figure of an aged man, whose right arm was raised above his head.

"That can't be Richardson, can it, Gwen? You'd better speak to him. But don't be gruff and domineering. He's very high-strung and sensitive, I think. Tell him, very gently, that we're here."

"He knows we're here," said Gwendolen, in a kind of hoarse groan. "He's looking straight at us. Is he going to strike us?"

"Pardon me, sir," piped her father, falteringly, "but—but—if you—want a hundred—or—or even a hundred and fifty for—er—Oriental missions—or opium—I'll let you have it. It has been an expensive day, sir, but—I'd really like to—to—blow you off."

"Don't talk like that, father," grumbled Gwendolen. "You are so tactless! You'll make him very angry, if you aren't careful."

"It's up to you, then," muttered Ogden, crossly. "Why don't you speak to him, Gwen?"

"You'll pardon my daughter, sir—" began the girl, in her father's most ceremonious manner.

"Drop that!" whispered Ogden, hysterically. "You can't fool him about our sex. He knows who's who in America. Try, try again, my daughter."

"If you would accept a thousand dollars, sir—" began Gwendolen, anew.

"Easy, easy, there!" cried her father, in a subdued whistle. "Don't insult him, Gwen. He isn't grasping. Anything over a hundred and fifty would seem like bribery or blackmail, wouldn't it?"

"We've got to do something, father," grumbled the girl. "I can't stand him any longer. I wish he'd speak."

"He's going to speak," exclaimed old Ogden, excitedly. "I can see it in his eye. Listen!"

"Will there be any fireworks, do you think, father?" asked Gwendolen, apprehensively.

"Listen!" repeated her father. "Why doesn't he go on? 'Speak, speak, thou fearful guest!'" he quoted, wildly, at the top of his daughter's voice.

Slowly, the apparition lowered his menacing arm and hand, but there came no softness to his piercing eyes.

"*The time for thy deliverance is now at hand,*" thundered the black spectre, "*and, in the sight of men, thou who art Richard the father, shalt be thyself; and thou who art Gwendolen the daughter, shalt be Gwendolen the daughter, from this time forth forevermore. But your eyes, that were closed, are closed; and the wisdom that ye lack ye shall never gain. Farewell! farewell! farewell!*"

A moment later, Richard Ogden found himself seated in a lounging-chair, an unlighted cigar in his hand, the smoking-room illuminated by electric jets, and Gwendolen, reclining upon a divan, gazing at him with dark, gleaming eyes.

"What does it mean, father?" gasped the girl, too overjoyed at her return to her own body to speak calmly. "Did you hear what he said?"

"Yes; I think he meant to imply—whoever he is—that he has given us up as a bad job, Gwendolen. Didn't you gather that impression from his words?"

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"And he—he intimated that he wouldn't do it again, didn't he, father?" asked Gwendolen, anxiously.

"That's what I understood him to say, my daughter," answered old Ogden, scratching a match and lighting a cigar. "Isn't this delightful!" he cried, gaily. "'Richard is himself again!' Yes, my dear, that old, black transposer has scratched us off his list. He let us down rather easy, at the last. No lightning; no thunder! So much better form, don't you think, Gwen, than his melodramatic matinée at the outset? But, I don't believe he has been quite pleased with us, my dear. There was a note in his voice, just now, that seemed to me to indicate displeasure, if not actual disgust."

"Well, you see, father," remarked Gwendolen, leaning back luxuriously against the divan's pillows, "he probably came to the conclusion that you'd be just as close about money-matters in my body as in yours."

"Close about money-matters?" growled the old man, flipping the ashes from his cigar with a petulant gesture. "Didn't I give Jeannette ten dollars to spend a pleasant evening? Didn't I offer her ten more after it was too late for her to accept it? And I was prepared to give that electrician one hundred dollars in cash if he would change us back again, Gwen. Fortunately, that old man in black isn't grasping. He seems to believe in art for art's sake. But I wouldn't call him an amateur, would you, my dear?"

"No," answered Gwendolen, wearily. "He's very clever, to put it mildly, father. And, now, I'll leave you to finish your cigar. I'm going into the library to write a note, and then I shall be off to bed. Good night, papa."

"But it's very late, my child," remarked her father, protestingly. "Is the matter so pressing that you cannot defer your note until the morning?"

"I could not sleep, father," said the girl, her cheeks reddening and her eyes snapping, "if I had not written a few lines to Teddy Langdon, asking him to come to me to-morrow. He has been treated outrageously, father. I owe him an explanation, and I——"

"An explanation?" grumbled her father. "Of a truth, that old, black transposer speaketh sooth when he saith: 'Your eyes, that were closed, are closed; and the wisdom that ye lack ye shall never gain.'"

"He did not have me alone in mind," protested Gwendolen, maliciously; "and, besides, I don't see what all that has to do with Teddy Langdon."

"'Your eyes, that were closed, are closed,'" repeated the old man, stubbornly; "but I'll try to open them, Gwen. Can't you see that the only permanent result of this—what shall we call it?—psychical disturbance, is to give me a line on Teddy Langdon? Now, I tell you, Gwen, he's flirtatious; not only that, he is very stubborn. He doesn't know when he's snubbed. I have no hesitation, my daughter, in placing him upon my list of unnecessary luxuries. I should hate to believe that my only child had become permanently addicted to what I may be permitted to call the Teddy Langdon habit."

"But I have, father," said the girl, with a sob. "I didn't know it until to-night. But I have."

"H'm!" grumbled old Ogden, crossly. "I don't wish to be tyrannical, Gwen, or unjust——"

"But you are both, father," put in the girl, emphatically, "where Teddy Langdon is concerned."

"But he's soft, my child," mused her father. "I've always suspected it, and now I know it. I might have had quite a pleasant evening, if it hadn't been for Langdon. But, *de gustibus non est disputandum!*"

"If you are going to quote Latin, papa, I must go at once," cried Gwendolen, tartly, turning to leave the room.

"Wait a minute, my dear," implored old Ogden, scowling at the smoke from his cigar. "About how

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much will Teddy cost us a year, do you think, if you marry him?"

"I'm sure I haven't the slightest idea," answered Gwendolen, lightly. "Shall I ask him, father?"

"I wish you would," admitted the old man, frankly.

"Well, I won't, papa. Good night!" cried the girl, as she hurried away from the smoking-room toward the library. A moment later, she was back again, her face pale, but a smile upon her lips.

"What now, Gwen?" asked her father, apprehensively.

"I have found that Oriental paper-weight, papa," she said, in a tense, excited voice.

Old Ogden sprang to his feet in consternation.

"Great Scott!" he cried, in affright. "Do you hear thunder, Gwen? Listen! Where did you find it? Have you got it with you? Don't drop it, for heaven's sake! It's a diabolical thing!"

The girl drew herself erect and gazed at old Ogden with dark, insistent eyes, the while her mouth and jaw displayed determination.

"Will you promise me, father, that, if I give you the paper-weight, you will place no obstacle in the way of my marrying Teddy Langdon?"

"A contract made under duress and compulsion, Gwendolen, is null and void," remarked her father, argumentatively. "But, if it comes to a choice, of course, I'd rather have Teddy Langdon around the house than that old black transposer. Take your Teddy, if you must have him, Gwen; and give me the paper-weight."

"It looks harmless, doesn't it?" said the girl, as she placed the Oriental curio in her father's outstretched hand.

"But looks don't count for much," remarked old Ogden, thoughtfully, gazing down at the uncanny paper-weight with tired eyes. "Your Teddy looks harmless, Gwen, but he isn't!"

TWO SONGS

HER greeting is a dulcet bell—
  Love's daybreak and delight;
Her smile is noon, and her farewell
  Leads in the stars at night.
She is the sunrise and the gleam
  Of dew upon the rose,
The vision that evokes the dream,
  The song in slumber's prose.

II

Roses are the rhymes I wreathe—
  Take them, every one;
Love—the fragrance that you breathe,
  And your smile their sun.
When the petals fall apart,
  Then, in melody,
You shall read a rose's heart,
  And the heart of me.

JULIAN DURAND.

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MADRIGAL

HEIGH-HO! I know where I would be,
When June comes up the dingle,
And earth with mirth and melody
Is throbbing, all a-tingle;
When every piper tunes his pipe,
And lips and roses both are ripe,
And not a lad goes single!

It's then, my masters, I would stray
Along the laneway bending,
Through meadow-reaches golden-gay,
To such a happy ending—
A cottage where, the porch above,
The vines entwine as though in love,
The leaves and blossoms blending.

There would a lass, with morning eyes,
Trip forth with gleeful greeting;
June, 'neath her span of radiant skies,
Ne'er saw so sweet a sweeting;
And ne'er, I ween, 'twixt maid and man,
Since hearts to thrill with love began,
A fonder lover's meeting!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

VERY LIKELY

ROMANTIC YOUNG LADY (*spending Summer on a farm*)—Just hear how those old trees in the orchard moan and groan in the storm, like the crying of a lost soul!

SMALL BOY—Well, I guess you'd make a worse racket if you were as full of green apples as they are!

SEALING THE BARGAIN

MADGE—How do you know he became engaged to that girl he took out in his auto?

MARJORIE—On the way home he didn't wear his mask.

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HOW "THE KID" WENT OVER THE RANGE

By Cyrus Townsend Brady

THERE had been a quarrel between them, a lover's quarrel over a trivial matter unworthy a second thought. Most lovers' quarrels have about as much foundation as theirs. Whatever the ethics of the situation, it was sufficiently painful to fill both of them with misery. On the principle of so bearing herself that the other party should suffer the more in any quarrel, Miss Josephine Cooper, deliberately disregarding several tentative efforts at reconciliation—which Lieutenant William Barnard, 12th Cavalry, U.S.A., being the injured party and the masculine, felt that it was only proper he should make—coolly ordered her horse, asked Captain McCauley to assist her to mount, and was preparing to ride away.

Before she did so, she flashed one look at Barnard hovering disconsolately near with a mien as profoundly abject as even the most self-willed woman could desire. Fortunately for him, he caught the glance of the sparkling blue eye, and seemed to find something encouraging there, although it was patent a moment later that the wish was father to the supposition.

At any rate, he stepped to her side, and, under pretense of adjusting the stirrup strap, detained her for a few moments—an attention to which she had no inward objection, be it said.

"Josephine—" he began.

"I think you would better say 'Miss Cooper'—after last night," she interrupted, coldly.

"I want to apologize," he went on, unheeding; "it's all my own fault. I was all wrong. I'm a beast."

He had not been, and he was not, but that was what the girl wanted him to say, nevertheless. Her heart throbbed with delight as he spoke, but, because she felt guilty herself, she concluded he had not yet had punishment enough.

"I accept your apology, Mr. Barnard, although no apology can ever restore matters to—er—the former footing. Good morning."

She lifted the reins, but he caught the bridle and detained her.

"Oh, don't say that!" he pleaded. "Surely, you were a little to blame yourself."

He was a profoundly politic young man, but this bad move was due to his agitation lest she should escape him.

"Not at all, sir," replied the girl, with a great show of spirit. "Take your hand off the bridle at once!"

"At least—" he urged, desperately, "don't go out alone."

"Why not?"

"I don't know, but I fear——"

"'A soldier and afeared'?" she quoted, laughing without merriment.

"'Afeard' for you, Josephine."

"Nonsense, Mr. Barnard! What is there to be afraid of? There are no Indians except tame ones and dead ones for a hundred miles. The most unpleasant object I am likely to encounter during the day could not be so bad as yourself, sir. I'm going for a canter. Will you release my horse?"

He made no movement to let go the bridle. She lifted the little rawhide whip he had given her.

"Great heavens!" he gasped, star-

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ing at her. "You wouldn't strike me?"

"Of course not, but the horse. Will you let him go? Thank you. Good morning."

She cantered off over the open toward the wood which bordered the river, leaving the lieutenant biting his lips in futile annoyance.

"Hello!" said the little bishop, looking up as the young man stamped his foot, and muttered something which was decidedly unecclesiastical. "What's the matter, Barnard?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Where is Josephine?"

"Gone off yonder."

"Oho!" said the bishop. "You have had a difference, have you? I see."

"Yes, sir. My cursed—I beg your pardon, sir—temper——"

"Ye-es," remarked the bishop, sapiently, "I suppose so. I've seen this sort of thing before. You can tell her it was your temper, but you needn't be particular to inform me. Never mind; she'll come back safely, presently."

"But I don't like to see her riding over this country alone, sir."

"What could happen to her?" asked the old man.

"Nothing that I know of."

"There are no hostiles around here now, are there?"

"Not one," answered Captain McCauley, joining in the conversation. "I don't know anything that could possibly happen to her. She is quite safe. There are no wild animals here, and she has a revolver in her holster. I saw to that, and she knows how to handle it, too. Bishop, it's just a lover's apprehension on Barnard's part. I wish he'd show as much interest in his company back at Fort Kinney."

"Suppose you follow her, Barnard," suggested the bishop. "I've no doubt she would be more than willing to have you overtake her."

"Not I!" replied that young man, moodily; "she wouldn't speak to me, if I did, and I'd better keep away from her for a little, I think."

"Very well," answered the old man; "McCauley and I are going fishing. Come along."

"Do you think she could get lost?" asked Barnard, as Captain McCauley scrambled to his feet, and got ready to join the bishop.

"Of course not," answered that veteran. "She has been on the plains before. She has only to keep watch of the sun, or, at worst, to follow the river. Come along, Barnard. Don't be a jack over that girl! She's all right. Better join us for a day's fishing. There's nothing so good for a man in a—a certain condition, as fishing. He can sit and moon over the water all day with his thoughts elsewhere, and be perfectly happy, thinking he is occupied and not wasting time. It looks cloudy over there, doesn't it, bishop?"

"Yes," answered the bishop, "it ought to be a good day for fishing. Come along, Barnard; the weather will accord with your emotions."

So, with laughter and gentle raillery, they took the disconsolate lover with them to the river. The bishop was enjoying one of his rare vacations, and Captain McCauley, an old friend, had invited him to spend as much time as he could spare at old Fort Kinney, in Northern Wyoming. The bishop had brought with him Miss Josephine Cooper, one of the Bethany College girls, who had graduated that year, and who wanted to see something of the life in the mountains before she returned to Philadelphia. As the bishop and her parents were old-time friends, they were willing that he should take her along. All the eligible young officers at Fort Kinney had promptly fallen in love with Miss Josephine, but Barnard seemed to be in higher favor than the rest.

Toward the close of the bishop's visit, McCauley, who was a bachelor, had made up a party for a fishing and hunting expedition down the Powder River Valley. Barnard, who was his junior lieutenant, had been invited, and Josephine Cooper, accompanied by Mrs. Maloney, the wife of Sergeant

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Maloney, who was in charge of the soldiers and servants of the party, had gone along, too. They had enjoyed a delightful time, and were preparing to return the following day, when the unfortunate quarrel between Josephine and Barnard cast a cloud over the happiness of both.

Barnard's misery, as he followed the others down to the river, however, was more than matched by Josephine's regret. Why had she been so perverse? He had apologized, admitted that he was wrong when he had not been, when she really was to blame; therefore, she might have forgiven him without loss of dignity or prestige, in which case he would have been with her, and she would not have been loping along under the trees alone. Not that she was afraid of anything, but there was no particular fun in riding alone, and she wished she could call him to her. She checked her horse and furtively glanced back, but she saw Barnard following the bishop and the captain toward the river away from her.

"Fishing!" she murmured to herself; "that's how much he cares for me! That's all men care for, anyway—killing something, or breaking some woman's heart! Get up, Dick!"

She laid her crop lightly on the neck of the big cavalry horse, and the well-trained animal instantly sprang into a long, sweeping gallop which carried her over the country at a great pace. He was not exactly a lady's horse—there were none at the post—but she was a good enough horsewoman to manage him thoroughly, and she rather enjoyed the big, rangy trooper.

Just before she entered the thick of the wood, she turned back for one more look. The camp, with its Sibley tents and big, canvas-covered wagons, shone brilliantly white in the green of the landscape, and Bridget Maloney's red petticoat, as she busied herself over the remains of the breakfast, added a bright dash of color to relieve the white. The sergeant and his helpers, the drivers, and the others, were lounging around the camp, but the three other men had vanished.

The country in which Josephine found herself was sufficiently beautiful to compensate—so far as the absence of humanity can ever be compensated for by nature—for her solitude. Before her, and close at hand, for the camp had been made among the foothills, rose the gigantic peaks of the Big Horn Range. It was Summer, but the tops of the mountains were covered with banks of snow which fairly blazed in the brilliant sunlight. She had been steadily ascending since leaving the camp, and she could look back for miles over scenery peculiarly wild, rugged and desolate.

Great, rocky buttes rose here and there around her, and sometimes the expanse of the country was broken by clumps of trees or level, grass-covered oases, nestling in the shadow of huge masses of rocks like that in which the camp was made. The winding course of the river as it meandered toward the distant plateau, which resembled the prairies of the bishop's diocese, was indicated by trees at all the levels. In front of her, the mountains rose bleak, awe-inspiring and grand. The influence of their majesty and calm gradually stole over her. A quarrel, even a great one, in the presence of these tremendous manifestations of nature seemed trivial, petty; and a little disagreement, such as had parted the lovers this morning, was of no consequence whatever.

She checked her horse, and would have turned back; but, reflecting that Barnard had gone fishing, she concluded to go forward over the foothills for a nearer look at those great mountains. She determined to forgive him as soon as she might see him. Nay, she would even admit that she had been in the wrong, not he. Having reached this happy conclusion, she felt immensely relieved, and gave herself with unalloyed pleasure to the enjoyment of the marvelous scenery. There was something in the situation entrancing to the Eastern girl, who, except for her four years at Bethany,

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had seen little of the West. She had come to Bethany only because her parents wished her to have the benefit of the bishop's care, as many other Eastern girls had received it. She rode on, therefore, threading her way among rocky buttes, galloping over stretches of grassy sward, plunging through bits of forest, forcing her horse across some narrow, shrunken stream, giving no thought whatever to time, distance or direction, and ever climbing higher and higher up the slope. Her eyes were fixed on the changing panorama of mountains before her as her tortuous course brought mighty peaks into successive view. She was fascinated.

The stillness was perfect. The solitude was absolute. There was nothing to disturb the current of her thoughts until she was suddenly awakened by a peal of thunder. It had been growing darker for some time, but she had not noticed it. She looked back quickly, and saw that the sky was heavily overcast. She had been long enough in the West to recognize the signs of a cyclone. It had developed with astonishing rapidity, and seemed about to burst upon her. What should she do?

Before her rose a lofty and threatening mass of rock. On the other side of it, possibly, she might find shelter of some kind. Her first thought, of course, had been to ride toward the camp, but, in the haze of that approaching cyclone, she could not see it, and she no longer knew in what direction it lay. This would have given her great uneasiness had not her thoughts been centered upon the storm. She could look for the camp later; now, she must seek shelter. Under the lee of the great rock she might find a hiding-place.

The horse, as if sharing her apprehension, had been pawing the ground uneasily, and welcomed the shake of the reins and the word which sent him toward the rock. It was, perhaps, half a mile distant, and the way was fairly clear. She looked at her watch. It was just eleven o'clock. She had been gone nearly four hours, therefore. They had breakfasted early, and she had started early from the camp, and the horse was somewhat tired, but she fairly raced him over that ground. Just as she gained the rock, the storm broke upon her.

There was not a tree in her vicinity. There was nothing that the cyclone could take hold of, so it passed harmlessly over her head with a terrific roaring that nearly frightened her to death. What might have happened to her had she not gained the shelter of that huge rock, she could see by the way the storm tore up trees farther away in its path.

After the wind had spent itself, down came the rain. Such was the storm's violence that she waited for some time, thinking it would break, but, at the end of a half-hour, there were no indications whatever of a cessation. It was now noon, and she was tired and hungry. It required some hardihood for her to leave the shelter of the rock, and battle with the rain, and she waited a few moments longer. She wished more than ever for the presence of Barnard. But something had to be done. She could not remain there forever. She doubted if any one could find her without a long, exhaustive search. She must get back of her own motion. How to do that was a question while the rain kept up.

At last, she walked her horse out into the open, and looked in the direction whence she supposed she had come. The view was hidden in a black whirl of driving rain. She could neither see nor hear the river. It had been her intention to make for it and then, so far as she could—for the Powder River up there was a wild, mountain stream, often tearing through cliffs and cañons, which would prevent any one from reaching its banks—to follow its general course down the mountain, until she reached the camp. That was the only intelligent course. Now, even that could not be done—at least, not in this rain.

It dawned upon her at last, as she sat on her shivering horse, drenched to the skin, that she was lost. She could

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scarcely see the top of the great rock that had sheltered her from the mist and rain. These weather conditions were rather unusual, but were, nevertheless, a painful fact to her. What could she do? She was utterly bewildered. Yet she could not remain still. She shook the reins over the horse's neck, and spoke to him. He turned, and slowly made his way forward. Going anywhere was better than standing still, for she had become so nervous that it was impossible for her to remain long in one place. She would let the horse choose, since she had lost all sense of direction.

The horse proceeded carefully, picking his way, at first, but finally he seemed to strike some sort of a trail. She had heard that there were no settlements nearer than Fort Caspar, toward which the military road from Fort Kinney led southward. Yet, as she rode on, by bending low over the saddle she could see marks of a trail. It was an ascending trail; they were going upward, but certainly not in the direction of the camp; and yet, if that were a trail, it must lead somewhere, it must have been made by a human being. There had been some effort, apparently, to put this way in a rough condition for a horse to travel. As she progressed, she grew more certain of this fact.

So absorbed was she in her speculations, that she did not notice that it was growing lighter. In fact, the rain had ceased almost as suddenly as it had begun, and, although the mists still hung low, it was evident that they were thinning also. She was irresolute as to what to do, but, seeing the trail more clearly, she now concluded the best thing was to keep on jogging ahead. By-and-bye the sun came out, and the mist disappeared with astonishing rapidity. As soon as she could see about her, she checked the horse, and surveyed the scene.

She was in the midst of a rocky pass. The scenery was rugged and grand beyond description. Far below her, the river rushed madly to the southward through a deep, gloomy cañon. Far above her, on either side, towered huge walls of rock. The trail led along the face of the cliff, and a few feet ahead of her bent around a bold escarpment, and was lost. It was a steadily contracting trail. Before her, it narrowed so that two horses could not pass. As she looked back, she could see nothing familiar. She had wandered into this great rift in the mountains—from where she knew not, how, she knew not. She might follow the trail back again, but whither it would lead her she had no idea; certainly, not to the camp.

It was long past noon now—one o'clock, she found, by looking at her watch. It would be hours before she could hope to reach the camp, if she ever reached it. Somebody must live at the end of that trail. She hesitated a moment or two, then decided to go forward. It would be perilous to pass around that narrow, jutting precipice, but it would be almost as perilous for her to go back. She shuddered as she saw the dangerous way over which she had come in the mist and rain. The horse had carried her safely thus far. She would trust him farther.

She wanted to see what was around that projecting buttress of rock, anyway, so she urged her horse cautiously on. It was narrower than she had imagined. Where the trail turned, her shoulder actually brushed against the overhanging rock. She shut her eyes, and repressed a desire to scream. The horse went so slowly and carefully that he scarcely seemed to move. She repented of her action. Why had she come? If he stepped on a loose stone, if his foot slipped, they would both go to their death over that precipice, hundreds of feet below. Mr. Barnard would never know how much she had loved him, how sorry she had been, that she would have been his willingly, that—the horse stopped!

She opened her eyes. They had turned the cliff. The trail widened before her, and she stood in safety on a little shoulder of the mountain as wide as a street. Before her was spread out one of the most enchanting pictures

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she had ever seen. The trail dropped gently down the slope into a beautiful valley, through which the river ran. The valley—"pocket" or "hole" as such things were called out there—was two or three miles long, perhaps a mile wide at its greatest width, and was literally surrounded by towering walls of barren, unbroken rock. At the other end, a waterfall plunged down a precipice that must have been a thousand feet high, forming the source of the river, which ran purling through the level surface of the valley till it entered the cañon. The area before her was dotted with trees. There were houses in the clearing, the smoke from chimneys floated softly in the still air. There were horses and cattle in the meadows. It was a paradise in these arid mountains.

For a moment, in the heavenly scene which spread before her vision, the girl forgot that she was alone, wet, shivering, hungry, that she was lost. The rain had given a fresh touch to everything, and the place appeared bathed in the sunlight like a gigantic gleaming emerald in a matrix of gray granite.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "how beautiful!"

"I'm glad you like it, ma'am," spoke a voice at her elbow.

As she turned toward the side of the mountain, she saw a rifle protruding over a low wall of rock; it was followed by a handsome head, and then by the tall, well-built and elegant person of a Western cow-boy in the conventional attire, loose shirt, flowing handkerchief, leather "chaps," boots, spurs, broad hat, and so on. Around his waist was a belt, from which depended a sheath knife on one side, on the other, a heavy revolver. He carried his rifle in his hand.

"Glad you like it, ma'am," he repeated, taking off his hat, and exposing a head covered with dark curls.

"Like it?" said Josephine. "Why, it is lovely! I'm lost, sir. My party is camped on the Powder River. I rode away alone this morning, and was overtaken by the storm. How I came here I scarcely know."

"Wall, you better git out these diggin's as quick as you kin, ma'am. Take my advice, an' mosey down that trail ter onct."

"But can't I get something to eat, and some one to show me the way?"

"Ain't nobody goin' to show you out of here. People who gits in here never comes out. As fer eatin', I've got some bread an' meat, an' here's some liquor."

He reached behind the rocky wall, and handed her a couple of roughly made sandwiches, and then drew from his pocket a silver-mounted flask of whiskey, which he uncorked and proffered her.

"Thank you," said the girl, taking the sandwiches; "I'm afraid I'm robbing you."

"Don't mind that; I kin git more," he answered, laconically, again offering her the liquor.

"No, I'd rather have some water, if you please."

"There ain't none up yere, but I'll git you some," turning away. "You'd better git off your horse an' stretch yourself while you eat. You'll have some tall ridin' to do before you git back, if y' ever do git back."

There was something mysterious about the whole thing, but Josephine Cooper felt sufficiently able to take care of herself in the presence of any ordinary man, and this handsome young fellow appeared entirely harmless, so she felt no uneasiness. She permitted him to assist her to dismount from the horse, which was too tired to move away, and she sat down on the rock and began to eat her sandwiches while her interlocutor went for water. He came back with a tomato-can full of that precious liquid, and handed it to her with an apology for the cup, and then stood and watched her eat and drink.

"I don't know what's going to happen to you," he said, at last.

"Happen to me?" exclaimed the girl. "Why, aren't you going to look after me? Take me down the moun-

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tain, and back to the camp. Mr.—but you haven't told me your name."

"Carter, ma'am," answered the young fellow, gazing dubiously at her; "Kid Carter, they calls me up here. What's yourn?"

"Josephine Cooper," responded the girl, extending her hand. "I am here with the bishop and Captain McCauley and Mr. Barnard from Fort Kinney."

"Oh, they're soldiers, ain't they?" said the young man, taking her dainty hand in his great paw. "Wot are they doin' there?"

"They are out for a little fun."

"That means pluggin' some poor devil like me, I suppose," grimly answered Mr. Carter.

"No, no; merely a hunting and fishing expedition," interrupted Miss Cooper. "Why, do you fear them?"

"I ain't afeard of no one," said the man, proudly. "Only——"

"Look here, Kid," interrupted another voice, "what in blazes hev you got here?"

A shocky, villainous-looking ruffian, dressed in rude garments of home-made manufacture, but armed like the cow-boy, suddenly appeared on the trail.

"Good Lord, it's a feemale woman! How did you git her? Say, where did you come from, sis?"

He slouched forward, and peered insolently into her face. She sprang to her feet instantly, shrinking nearer to Kid Carter, who instinctively placed himself between the two.

"Who is this person?" indignantly asked the girl.

"Pusson!" roared the other man, throwing back his head and laughing viciously, "pusson, eh? I'm a gent, I'll hev you understand, as has killed four men to his two."

"A murderer!" cried the girl, and then, suddenly turning to Carter, she asked him, "Is it true? Are you a——?"

"Murderer?" interrupted the second man. "We're all murderers up here, or horse-thieves, or else we've done time, an' the law wants us, or——"

"What is this place?" asked the girl, faintly.

"It's called 'Hell Hole,'" answered Kid Carter, biting his lip and blushing, violently.

"Yes, that's what we call it," interrupted the other man, again. "My name's Hollis, Pete Hollis. 'Three-fingered Pete,'" he added, holding up his left hand, "'cause I got this one cut off in a little round-up with a gent, w'ich I blowed the top of his head off to let some light inter his brains, so he wouldn't tackle a man like me. An' this pocket w'ich we calls 'Hell Hole' belongs to us, me an' some gents below. We diskivered it, an' we keeps open house fer everybody that's in trouble, ye know, as is wanted by a sheriff or the military, or anythin' like that. The way you come is the only way in, an' nobody that comes in goes out ag'in. See that little rock pile there? We've allus got a man there keepin' watch. We kin hold this place against a thousand men. All we've got to do is to draw a bead with a rifle when we hears any one comin', an' blaze away. They can't only come one at a time, an' we allus settles the fust one afore t'other gits around."

"But those houses down there?"

"You don't think we live like Injuns in tepees, do ye? We farm a little down there, jist enough to keep us in grub. Why, we've got a society, family life, down there. Women—I'll interduce you to 'em. Wot are you in here fer?"

"Great heaven!" exclaimed the girl to the cow-boy. "Take me away from here!"

"Don't you move, Carter," cried the other man, covering him with his Winchester. "I got the drop on ye. I'd be justified in blowin' yer brains out, Carter, fer these interestin' perceedin's. But you're a tenderfoot here, an' don't know the rules of the range. Everything wot comes in here has to go to the captain for his inspection. If you claims the girl, you kin do it down there, though I don't reckon the claim'll hold good, seein's I come on the scene. Go on down that trail; you foller him, miss; your horse'll come along, I reckon."

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"But if I refuse to go?" asked the girl.

"I'll let daylight through him," roared Hollis, pointing to Carter.

"Don't mind me," said that young man, smiling up at her. "I wouldn't mind it. I was a fool to let him git the drop on me. It's all in a day's work."

"Have you killed a man, too?" she asked, looking at him in a daze while he stood silently before her.

"Of course, or he wouldn't be up here," said Hollis. "Now, stop this palaverin', an' mosey."

The descent into the valley was neither long nor difficult. At the foot of the trail there was an open clearing, on one side of which, under some beautiful old trees, stood a rude house. Two or three men were lounging on the porch in front of it, playing cards. A slatternly woman, who had once been pretty, was standing in the doorway.

"Hello, Pete!" cried one of the men, "what hev you got there?"

"A woman, by jinks!" exclaimed one man, looking up from the cards.

"An' a stunner!" cried a second. "Hev you killed yer man, or wot are ye up here fer?"

"Welcome to 'Hell Hole,' madam", said another, who seemed of a higher grade than the others.

"Sirs," instantly said Josephine, with a shudder, "I am a member of a hunting party on the other side of the mountains, and lost my way in the rain and mist. I don't know how I got here. I wish some one to show me the way back to my camp."

"Captain," cried Hollis, springing forward, "she hadn't ought to be let go. Let her stay here; I'll take keer of her."

"You will, eh?" said the semi-respectable individual addressed as "captain." "Well, who found her?"

"I did," said Carter; "she come up the trail on my watch, an' I rounded her up."

"Didn't look much like roundin' up to me," said Hollis, savagely. "W'en I saw 'em she was a-settin' on the ground eatin' his sandwiches, an' he was a-talkin' to her as peaceful an' lamblike——"

"She is my captive," said Carter, stubbornly. "I found her—I took her; I could hev shot her all right. I'd drawed a bead on her w'en she rounded that curve, but I seen she was a woman. I made her git off her horse. We come here. She's my captive. Ain't you, miss?"

He shot one appealing glance at her. The girl was in a frightful situation. What she should do she could not imagine. There was something, however, in Mr. Carter's look that promised hope. If she read him aright he was willing and anxious to help her. Moistening her lips she answered, staking all upon his worthiness:

"Yes, he caught me."

"But," said Hollis, starting forward, his face flushing, "she's mine. I want her, an' I'm goin' to have her."

"Get back, you dog!" said the captain, whipping out his own gun, and covering Hollis with it; "you don't seem to know how to treat a lady. Don't you lift a finger, or I'll blow your brains out. Madam," he said, turning to the girl, "my name is Bell—John Bell. I was once a surgeon in the United States army. I had a—er—little difficulty with a man down in Laramie, and I—in short—I killed him, and had to pull my freight. That's how I come to be here. Have no fear. You shall be safe."

"Thank you," cried the girl, a gleam of relief appearing in her face; "thank you."

"She's mine, I tell you," said Carter, sullenly. "I got her, an' by the laws you made me sign to last week w'en I fust come here, the disposin' of her belongs to me."

"He's right, captain."

"The Kid's kerrect, old man," cried one of the ruffians.

"Law is law," added another.

It seemed strange to hear these outlawed men pleading the power of the law. The captain looked anxious. Suddenly, his face fell upon the form of Hollis.

"What are you skulking here for,

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you hound!" he shouted. "Are you not on watch? Get back to the trail; the whole United States army might be pouring through that pass, for all you know! Up there, lively!"

Hollis turned instantly, and started on a run up the road, pursued by the angry shouts of the rest of the gang, who were profoundly incensed at him for his absence, for their safety depended upon their rigid control of that pass.

The place was a city of refuge for all the scoundrels of the Northwest. It had been held inviolate for a dozen years by the prowess of the men who found shelter there. It was impossible to enter the "pocket" except through that dangerous pass. Sheriffs had tried it, mobs of indignant cattle-owners had attempted it, even the United States army had essayed it, but with no success whatever. When a man got in there he was safe from punishment, so long as he stayed there, provided, of course, that he were able to get along with the other outlaws and desperadoes who lived there.

"Madam," said Bell, "what the Kid says is right. That's the law of this place. We're all outlaws, but we have learned from that very fact that we must have some law or we can't live. You belong to him. But, hark ye, Kid Carter, if you harm that young woman, by God, look to it! I'll shoot you on sight! Who is with your party, madam?"

"Captain McCauley and the bishop——"

"If you ever get out of here alive, and if you ever see them again," continued the doctor, "give my compliments to McCauley, and tell him I'm living in Hell—" He paused just long enough before he added the word "Hole" to make his meaning apparent to her.

"Ma'am," said Carter, "the sooner we git out of here, the better."

"What are you going to do with her?" asked Bell.

"Take her back to her camp."

"Wot!" cried one of the men, "you're goin' to leave the 'Hole'?"

"I am."

"Well, it's your own risk," said another; "doggone it, I'd not do it fer no woman!"

"Are you comin' back, Kid?"

"If I kin git back," said the young man.

"Bring some coffee, Nell," cried the doctor to the woman in the door, a lady who had made way with her husband. "I'm sorry we have no sugar at present," he added, handing it to Josephine; "we mostly take things black and strong in here. Have you had a bite to eat?"

"All I wanted," answered the girl, drinking her coffee, the stimulating effect of which she thought would be valuable to her.

"Allow me," continued the doctor, as Carter led up the horse, which had been refreshed by a good drink of water, and had been cropping the grass. He lifted her to the saddle with perfect ease and grace. "It's a long time," he said, softly, "since I have met a lady, and I wish to God—but this is part of the punishment."

Carter seized the bridle, turned the horse about, and they went up the trail, leaving the captain and one or two of his associates, who emulated his movement, standing bareheaded behind them. They went along for some distance without saying a word. Carter plodded moodily ahead, and the horse followed steadily after. It was the woman who broke the silence.

"Mr. Carter," she said, softly.

There was no answer.

"Mr. Carter," louder.

Still no answer.

"Mr. Carter!"

"Well, wot is it?" he said, gruffly, at last, not looking at her.

"Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

"What those men said. Are you—— ?"

"Yes, every one of us."

"It can't be possible! And you are——?"

"You see, ma'am," said the young man, stopping and turning to her, his face flushed, "it was this way. He

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done me dirt, an' 'most broke me down in Laramie. Filled me with bad whiskey, an', w'en he got me drunk, robbed me of my money at kyards. Then I up and plugged him full of holes. The sheriff tried to take me, an'—an' I laid him out, too."

"And all this for a sum of money?"

"It didn't belong to me," explained Carter; "it belonged to the Cross Bar Cattle Company. I was fetchin' it from the bank fer the old man to pay the hands with—a whole lot of it, too. I wish to God I hadn't shot him. Savin' a drunk now an' then, an' a gamble w'en I had the money, I've lived clean an' straight, as punchers go. But that was onct too often. I didn't mean to shoot the sheriff, noway."

"Then what happened?" asked the girl.

There was something so boyish and frank about the young man, and she had gone through so much that day, she had seen him against such a background of utter blackguardism and crime in the persons of the others, that she scarcely realized the enormity of his offense.

"Then, I broke away fer this place. It's knowed all over the West. If you onct git in here you're safe so long as you stay here. It's well named, ain't it?—to turn a paradise into Hell Hole by interducin' men like them."

"Do you have to stay here all your life?"

"I ain't goin' to stay here ten minutes."

"How is that?"

"I'm goin' to take you back to the camp."

"Couldn't I find my way back alone?"

"Not in a thousand years."

"And after that?"

"I'll come back here."

"Oh, don't!" cried the girl.

"Where else kin I go? If I left here I'd git ketched an' jugged, an' tried, an', as the evidence is plain, I'd swing fer it. I'm young yet. I ain't quite sick of this place. They do git tired of it sometimes an' break out, no matter wot happens, but I kin stand it a little longer. Gosh! it'll be horrible when you're gone—it sure will. Old Doc Bell said it had been years—I heard him—since he spoke to a lady. I ain't never spoke to one since I left my mother, before this mornin'; leastways, no one like you. Don't be skeered," he added, as he saw a strange look sweep over her face; "I won't hurt you."

"I'm not in the least alarmed, Mr. Carter; I trust you implicitly."

"Say, don't call me 'Mr. Carter'; it seems strange like, an' as if you was a judge or a court, or somethin'. Everybody calls me Kid."

"Very well, then. I'm not a bit afraid of you, Kid. I know you will take me safely back to the camp. You were ready to protect me a moment since."

"I'd like to see any one lay a finger on you; it would 'a' been the last of him," said the man, in the most matter-of-fact way.

"Thank you," said the girl.

"Say, miss, put it there," he said, innocently, extending his hand.

Without a moment's hesitation, she put her own hand within his. He shook it vigorously a second time. By this time they had come to the curve of the mountains where the pass narrowed, and where the watchman was stationed. Hollis stood there, gun in hand, looking as ugly as might be expected from one of his calibre.

"I've got to leave you to go alone a bit," whispered Carter; "I've got to take keer of that man. Ride around that bend. I'll cover you an' follow you."

The girl obediently urged her horse forward, although all her terror came back to her as the animal slowly edged its way around the narrow trail over the yawning abyss. Behind her, with his back toward her and his face toward Hollis, his gun in his hand, stumbled Kid Carter, and she heard him say, as she turned the corner:

"Don't make no move with that gun of yourn, Hollis, or I'll let daylight through you, an' they'll need another man to watch this pass."

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"Are you goin' down with that woman?" asked Hollis.

"I am; what's that to you?"

"Well, you're a fool!" snarled the other man. "I don't need to waste my shot on you. You'll be dancin' on nothin' in Laramie in a few days."

"That's my business."

"Yours and the sheriff's," laughed the other.

"An' I warns you to stay right here where you are, fer the present," said Carter, paying no attention to this jeering remark. "If you pokes your nose around that bend of rock, I'll make a target of it. An' I'll aim to kill, too."

Another moment and he had slipped around the cliff and stood by her side. She had caught only a portion of the conversation, but it had been enough for her.

"There is no danger to you, is there?"

"No," answered the man, lying with the grace and ease of a gentleman. "They don't know me down there; that is, they don't know wot I've done or that I've put fer this country, an' if you don't tell 'em, I kin git back all right."

"If I don't tell? Is that kind? I trusted you; can't you trust me?"

"I kin," answered Carter, instantly. "But it's gittin' late, an' we've got to hurry up. We won't git to that camp till long after dark, as it is. I wisht I had a pony."

He seized the bridle, and pushed rapidly down the trail.

"Why don't you reform, and try to make something out of yourself?" asked the girl, when they had crossed the dangerous part of the pass, and conversation was more easy.

"Reform? Where'd I go to reform? Do you think anybody could reform in that hole?"

"Can't you get away somewhere—where people do not know you?"

It never occurred to the girl that she was actually making herself accessory after the fact to a murder, or, at any rate, to the murderer—compounding a felony, as it were!

"I ain't got no money noway to help me along," continued the cow-boy. "The whole country south between the railroad an' here is on the lookout fer me."

The girl put her hand into the bosom of her dress, and pulled out a small purse. Before she could say a word, or even extend her hand, he stopped her.

"Put that up! I ain't that low."

"I know you're not, but——"

"How much hev you there?" he asked, comprehending the small capacity of the dainty affair in a glance.

"Four or five dollars, but I can get plenty more."

"That wouldn't carry me a hundred miles, an' if you had a million I wouldn't take it. I ain't that mean. No use of your talkin', miss; I drawed these cards, an' I've got to play this hand out, wotever it is."

There was something so hopeless about the situation in which her sympathies were so profoundly enlisted, that the girl was filled with dismay. There did not seem to be any subject upon which they could converse, and they journeyed forward thereafter in silence, broken only by his warnings and her infrequent questions. Carter seemed to know the lay of the land fairly well.

"I have hunted in it, hunted them fellers," he said, in answer to a question. "In '92 I was one of a posse that tried to clean out that pocket back there—that infernal gang; I beg your pardon, ma'am—so I knows this country pretty well. They keep another lookout above that place where I was keepin' watch, an' we've knowed all about your party for days. Some of the gang was fer goin' down an' raidin' the camp, but didn't dare; there was too many men in the party."

The girl shuddered at the possibility the man's simple speech conjured up in her mind. They had been so entirely peaceful in the camp, never dreaming of danger of any kind.

The two had progressed several miles, when, suddenly coming around a gigantic butte, which Josephine thought she recognized, and which was indeed

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the one that had afforded her shelter from the cyclone, they had a fair view of the whole eastern slope of the mountains. Away off in the distance lay the white tents of the camp.

It was now late in the afternoon, and the girl could not possibly reach it before dark; but she instantly turned to Carter, who stood by her side, surveying the prospect.

"There is the camp," she said.

"I sees it."

"I can make my way there now, I think, without your assistance."

"It'll be dark long afore you git there," returned the man. "I'm goin' with you."

She endeavored to dissuade him, but could not move him. They went forward more rapidly, after that; as rapidly, indeed, as the man could keep pace with the horse, and it was not until late in the evening that they found themselves on a bit of level ground, perhaps half a mile of prairie, with the trees at the other end, which alone shut out a view of the camp. Off to one side, they could hear the rush of the river. Scarcely had they progressed a quarter of the way down the open, when a little party of horsemen entered it behind them. As soon as these caught sight of Josephine and her companion they shouted loudly to attract their attention.

"Oh!" cried the girl, turning her horse, "there's the bishop!" as she recognized a little, stout man at the head of the party. "And there's Captain McCauley and—and Mr. Barnard."

"Who are the others?" asked Carter, whipping out his gun. He stood poised on his foot, as if to run. "Those are your friends; but that other man, an' them with him; I reckon they're lookin' fer me."

"What do you mean?"

"That's the sheriff of Johnston county, an' that's his posse. They've been huntin' me, an' your friends hev pressed them inter service to hunt you. It's all up with me, but I'm glad you're safe."

"But you will be taken!" cried the girl; "they will——"

"No matter."

"Wait!"

Disengaging her feet from the stirrups, she sprang to the ground, instantly.

"Take my horse!" she gasped. "Quick! You saved me, I'll save you."

The man hesitated.

"Go!" she urged.

It was the work of a second for him to unbuckle the saddle, and throw it aside. Gathering the reins in his hand, he leaped to the back of the big cavalry horse.

"Good-bye!" cried the girl, lifting her hand.

They were very near now, but he pulled off his sombrero, bent low over the saddle, seized her hand and pressed a long kiss upon it.

"If I'd 'a' met you afore," he cried, "I might hev been a different man."

The party was close at hand. Still holding his cocked pistol, Carter put the spur into the horse. He started off on a gallop instantly toward the other end of the glade.

"Josephine!" cried the bishop, as they approached, "are you safe? We have been searching for you all day."

"Entirely so," answered the girl, "thanks to that man," pointing to the rapidly disappearing figure.

"Who is he?" asked Barnard, jealously, as he dismounted and took her hand. "I've been wild with——"

"By gosh, I know him!" exclaimed the sheriff. "That's my man. That's Kid Carter!—him we've come to ketch, boys. After him!"

He lifted his Winchester as he spoke, and leveled it at the fleeing man. The girl rushed toward the sheriff, frantically waving her hands and screaming. The startled horse jumped aside, the gun went off, and the bullet sped harmlessly down the valley. But, by this time, other rifles were cracking; she could not attend to them all, and one shot hit the old troop horse. He jumped into the air and fell. Carter, revolver in hand, was off him in a minute, making for the woods near the river bank amid a fusillade of bullets. Josephine Cooper, who had stood ap-

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palled at first, now ran into the open between the posse and the fugitive, her arms extended as if to protect him. She might as well have tried to check a whirlwind, for they brushed her aside without a second's hesitation, and galloped forward, firing as they ran. The cruel joy of a man hunt was with them. They were good shots in that posse. Carter suddenly staggered and fell just as they reached him. He lay on the ground, his revolver still clenched in his hand.

"Be careful, boys," said the sheriff, riding up; "he's got his gun with him yet."

"You needn't be afraid," gasped out the Kid, dropping the weapon, "I won't shoot. I don't want no more blood on my hands. Where's the lady?"

"Here," answered Josephine, forcing her way through the men; "are you much hurt?"

"I'm done for, this time. Say, I'm glad I don't hev to go back to that place."

"What does he mean?" asked the sheriff.

"That pocket in the mountains, you know," said the girl, stooping down and slipping her arm under the dying man's head; "I ventured in there in the storm——"

"Good gosh! have you been in Hell Hole," said the sheriff, "and got out alive?"

"Yes, thanks to him. He claimed me, and brought me here at the risk of his life."

"Kid," said the sheriff, stooping down and taking the man's hand, "that was white of you. If I'd known that, I'd be blamed if I'd 'a' shot at you! Eh, boys?"

"It's just as well," said the Kid, faintly. "Thank you, ma'am; I'm glad I done it. Is that the bishop you was talkin' about? I have been a bad boy, bishop. But seein's I'm knocked out this time, don't you think I'll git a show when I'm gone over the range?"

"You gave your life for another, for this girl, my boy," said the old man, kneeling down by him. "It was a sacrifice, an atonement. 'Greater love,' said Jesus, 'hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

"An' I didn't shoot the posse when I might hev. I wanted as clean a hand as I could carry now. I'm sorry to have all this unpleasant business a-doo-in' afore you, miss; I sure am. It's growing dark mighty sudden, ain't it? It must be gittin' late. I'm not afraid to die if you think I hev a chance."

"Yes, yes," cried the girl, "I'm sure of it."

"I've been in hell onct to-day," he gasped out, "an' in heaven, too." He smiled up at her. "Would you lemme kiss your hand ag'in afore——?"

The girl glanced interrogatively at Barnard. There was no need of explanation between these two at this time. She knew that he loved her and he knew that she loved him, and the petty quarrel was composed in the shadow of the death-angel's wing. Then, she bent her head, lifted Carter's head a little higher and kissed him on the lips. The smile broadened—it was almost a laugh—then stopped suddenly. It was as if a hand had been passed over his face and smoothed it out.

She laid his head back on the sod, and rose to her feet. The bishop still knelt, praying in the twilight; the others stood around, their hats in their hands.

But poor Kid Carter had gone over the range.

EASILY ACCOMPLISHED

"DID they have any difficulty in getting Smith into the asylum?"

"Oh, no! His wife talked him into it."

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LOGICAL

THEY met within the darkened hall;
He said, "I've brought some roses."
Her answer seemed irrelevant;
It was, "How cold your nose is!"

Her answer seemed irrelevant—
But, when you've recollected,
Then you can plainly see that it
Most closely was connected.

ANDY NAME.

A PUZZLE FABLE

AN American Heiress was wooed by a Foreign Prince, who urgently Besought her to become his Wife. In order to Test the Sincerity of his Love, she asked: "Will you still marry me if I Give away All my Money for Charity, and become as Poor as yourself?"

The Prince considered a while, and then Responded: "Yes, provided you will still marry me if I Renounce my Title and become a plain, republican Person like yourself."

QUERY: Did she Agree to his Proposition?

THE SYMPHONY

"SHE is lovely beyond compare," gushed Admiration. "She looks like a dream; her voice is music. She is a human Symphony."

"No doubt, my child," drily answered Experience. "But beware of these dreamy creatures, who look like Symphonies. They are eminently calculated to create discord."

"I HAVEN'T much to offer you, dear—sort of love in a cottage, you know."

"Why, Jack, I think love in a cottage would be just too sweet for anything! But where would our town house be?"

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IN THE CLOISTER OF SAN JUAN

By Thomas Walsh

MOONLIGHT haunts the little garden
In the cloister of San Juan
Where the novice, Seraphita—
She so fair to look upon—
Steals along the fragrant passes
Near the *fountains, murmuring* low,
Where the lazy harbor slumbers,
And the stars and lamplights glow.
In that garden on the hillside,
There are roses to enslave
Poets' hearts with dreams of beauty
To the threshold of the grave;
Shrines of marble are reflected
In the fonts that never cease,
And the breezes in the trellis
Whisper orisons for peace.
Gently there the youthful novice,
In her cloister-habit white,
Bends to whisper to the roses
Dripping with the dews of night:
"Are you weeping, little sisters?
Is there sorrow in your breast
'Mid the night so calm and saintly
When the weary are at rest?"
And they answer in the moonlight—
For their souls were all her own,
Since they blossomed in her kisses
And had felt her hand alone:
"We are weeping, Seraphita,
O'er the sorrows of the rose."
"Nay, belovèd," she makes answer,
"Are your blossoms not of those
Who alone upon the altar
Through the silent night repose,
All your hearts in love consuming
At the threshold of your Lord?"
But they whisper, softly weeping,
"Few there be for such award."
"Nay," she pleads, "if earth so claim you,
There are tokens that enshrine
Love in trothèd maidens' bosoms
With avowal half-divine."
Then they tell her, "Seraphita,
Think not 'tis for them we weep

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Who, upon the day they blossom,
  At the feet of Jesus sleep;
Not for them, our little sisters,
  Who on maidens' breasts find grace,
There to breathe out all their being
  In love's sacrificial place;
But our tears are falling, falling,
  For the roses that must lie
All the perfect night on bosoms
  Whence they hearken base reply,
And on hearts grown deaf and heedless
  To the pleadings roses make—
Roses that decoy to kisses
  That are poisoned like the snake.
Yea, we weep our sisters' sorrows—
  Most of all the dumb despair
Of the rose upon the bosom
  Set for love that is not there."
Then—so runs the simple legend—
  There came fear within the eyes
Of the novice, Seraphita,
  As she listened to their sighs—
Heard, or felt, their meaning vaguely,
  And with prayer her lips upon,
Hastened from the witchèd moonlight
  In the cloister of San Juan.

NOT HIS PURPOSE

RUBE (*to Dan, who has just come out of the water into which he had fallen*)—How did you come to fall in the river?

DAN—Didn't come to fall in the river—come to fish.

DOUBLY FOOLISH

GADDS—Why shouldn't a man marry his deceased wife's sister?

FADDS—That puts him in the clutches of his mother-in-law all over again.

CONGRUITY

HARTH—What was all the uproar about in the women's convention?

STARK—They were having an argument as to which of the candidates should receive the loving-cup.

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JANE'S GENTLEMAN

By Owen Oliver

I PUT up with a good deal of Jane's carelessness, without saying anything; but, when she mislaid the clothes-basket, I had to speak about it. When I find fault with her she generally argues; but, on this occasion, she only sighed.

"I've got something on my mind, Miss Molly," she said. "That's where it is."

"No, it isn't. It's on the dining-room table."

She stopped in the middle of washing a tea-cup, and dropped it. Luckily, it only fell in the water.

"That jest shows!" she exclaimed.

"It shows that you are very thoughtless."

"Ah!" She shook her head. "You ain't old enough to understand."

"I am fourteen," I reminded her. I have kept house ever since mother died; and I understand more than Jane does.

"I don't deny," she admitted, as you've got sense for your age; but there's some things wot you 'ave to go through to know about." She sighed again, and nearly let a jug slip.

"You will break something in a minute," I warned her. "I have been through *that!* Why don't you attend to what you are doing?"

"I ain't got no 'eart for washin' up."

She sat down on a chair, and wiped her eyes with her apron. So, I took the tea-cloth, and began drying the things; but she jumped up and snatched it away.

"You ain't goin' to do the work wot I'm paid for," she said, "not while I got strength to stand—wot won't be long!"

I nearly laughed. There is nothing the matter with Jane except her appetite—it is enormous.

"What is wrong, Jane?" I asked.

"It's a—a gen'l'man."

I think she blushed; but she is naturally red, so you can never be sure.

"What gentleman?"

"One wot 'as been after me."

"After you?"

"Payin' 'is attentions, as the master calls it in them 'ere stories."

My father is Frank Marchant, the famous author. He writes stories, and sells them—at least, he sells some of them. He would sell them all if editors had literary taste.

"Has he left off paying them?" I inquired.

"Left off! Not 'im."

"Then, why aren't you satisfied?"

She walked over to the dresser, and hung up some cups.

"I ain't good enough for 'im," she said, "an' that's gospel truth. 'E's a perfick gen'l'man, that's wot 'e is. An' as for eddication! Why, 'e can write a letter as easy as kiss my 'and!"

"Does he kiss your hand often?"

"I'd like to ketch 'im!"

"I thought when people were—were 'paying attentions'——"

Jane laughed, scornfully. "'*Ands* wasn't made for kissin'," she said. I do not think Jane's were!

"No-o. What is he like?"

She started cleaning the fender. "There ain't nothink the matter with 'is looks."

"Is he tall?"

"'Bout middlin'."

"And handsome?"

"A proper figger of a man, I call 'im."

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"Dark or fair?"

"You might say as 'e's fair, considerin' 'is 'air is lightish. Some people sez as it's red." She scowled at the fireplace. "Pack of nonsense! An' if it *was* red, wot 'ud it matter? It's 'is ways wot I look to."

"Of course. What is his name?"

"You ain't 'alf inquisitive!"

"Don't be rude, Jane," I said, severely. I am not at all inquisitive; but I like to know about things.

"Well," she said, "it's Claude Montmorency. It was partly the name wot I took to."

I thought that "Mrs. Claude Montmorency" would sound funny for Jane, but I did not say so. Father says that tact is another name for holding one's tongue.

"It ain't nothink to 'is manners," she assured me. "You should 'ear 'im say 'Good evenin', Miss De Vere,' when I—" She stopped suddenly, and turned so very red that I knew she was blushing.

"Miss De Vere!" I looked at her. "Oh, Jane!"

"'Ow could I tell 'im a name like 'Arris?"

"You'll have to tell him sooner or later."

"There's lots of things I'll 'ave to tell 'im sooner or later. That's wot's on my mind." She wiped her eyes.

"You haven't been passing yourself off for somebody else?" She nodded. "It isn't right."

She put the fender down with a bang.

"I never said as it was. . . . Wish I 'adn't never been born."

I knew it was very wrong, and I ought to have been cross with her; but she began crying dreadfully, so I couldn't. Jane is a great worry to me; but she means well.

"What have you told him?" I asked.

"More'n I can remember. An' bound to go an' contradic' myself some time or other. I said as I was companion to a lady, wot treated me like one of the fambly; an' 'ad expectations from my uncle—wot I 'adn't never none; an' as I could play the pianner beautiful, an' sing. Some of them songs of yours an' the master's I tole 'im, like 'Jerusalem, wot Slayest the Profits,' an' ''Oner 'er 'Arms.' They're classy ones, ain't they?"

"Ye-es," I agreed; "I think they are." I am afraid they are not Jane's class!

"An' as I knowed French." I could not help laughing. "Well, I 'ave learned a bit, from 'earin' you teach the boys." I try to help them with their home lessons; but I am afraid my own pronunciation is not very good. "An' 'ad late dinner, I said, an' *bête noir* afterward."

"*Bête noir!*" I cried. "What *do* you mean?"

"Coffee without milk, you said it was."

"Er—yes." She meant *café noir*, of course!

"An' as I'd been to Paris, an' seed the Bridge of Sighs there, wot 'e 'adn't noticed. So I 'ad the best of 'im for once. I seed it at the Exhibition, wot master give me an' my sister tickets for, you remember." She was thinking of Venice, of course. "I got a rare good mem'ry, excep' for mixin' up things."

"Ye-es. If I were you, I shouldn't tell him any more things that aren't—that you haven't seen."

"No more I ain't goin' to; but that won't call back wot I've told 'im already."

"Perhaps he'll forget, if you don't say any more about them."

She shook her head. "Not 'im. 'E's an orful one for recollectin'. Arst me twice last evenin' about Lord Blackfriars."

"About *whom?*"

She pretended to be looking for something in the cupboard. "Another gen'l'man, wot was after me, I said."

"Oh, Jane! how *could* you?"

"Didn't want 'im to think as I was goin' too cheap. Made 'im rare wild, anyhow. 'E said as 'e'd knock 'is 'ead off for tuppence; an' no lords wasn't never to be trusted—wot I knew, of course, an' ev'rybody does."

Jane knows all about lords—in novelettes.

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"What are you going to do now?" I inquired.

"That's wot I was goin' to arsk you, seein' as you're a sharp un, if you ain't no age." I shook my head. "Suppose as you was in my place?"

"I should not have told him such things."

I do not mean ever to fall in love; but, if I did, I should want him to like me just as I was, and not because I was something else that I wasn't.

"But supposin' you '*ad?*"

"Then, I should tell him the truth."

She dropped the broom with a bang. "It ain't never no good askin' people for advice," she grumbled. "They always tell you wot you know; an' ain't goin' to do; an' they wouldn't neither. My aunt sez, wot you've 'eard me speak of——"

"I must go and dust the bedrooms," I said, hastily. I think Jane has told me all that her aunt has ever said; and she cannot work when she is talking.

Jane did not mention the gentleman again till she came in next evening. It was her night out, and I was in the kitchen making the coffee.

"'Ere," she said, "I'll do that." She hates to see me work, but I do not mind. "Do me good to take my mind off things." I could see that she had been crying.

"Have you quarreled?" I inquired.

"No one couldn't quarrel with 'im. 'E's too much of a gen'l'man. An' 'e sez—'e sez—" She put her head down on the table, and her shoulders shook dreadfully. I *was* so sorry for her.

"What did he say?" I thought she wanted to tell me, or I should not have asked.

"As I was a perfick little lady; an' that was why 'e thought so much of me. Oh, oh!" She rocked herself to and fro. "In course, I 'ad my gloves on; an' this 'at wot you chose for me, an' said yourself was 'refined.' I was glad I didn't 'ave that one with the big feather, 'cause 'e can't abear 'em, 'e sez. I done my best to speak quiet and proper—I done my best!"

"You speak much better lately," I told her. "There, there! Don't cry, there's a dear."

"I think of things more'n I did, don't I, Miss Molly?"

"Much more," I agreed. I am afraid it was not quite true, because I had found the coffee in the tea-cannister; but I did not wish to upset her. "Your writing is improving, too." I was setting her copies.

"I'll get done early ev'ry day, an' do some more," she declared. "An', p'r'aps, 'e won't find out about my writin'. But I'll never be a scholar like 'e is."

Jane was very good all the rest of the week. I had to stop her from hitting Bob and Tommy on Saturday; but they had been calling her "Lady Jane," so I could not blame her, really.

She came to ask me if she was "all right," before she went out on Sunday. She wore the "refined" hat, and a new jacket. Father had sold several tales, so I had been able to pay up her wages. She has rather a pretty face, and she was much quieter and paler than usual. So, she really did look almost ladylike.

She was paler still when she came in, and hardly spoke. When I went up to bed, there was a light in her room, and I went in. She was sitting on the edge of the bed, with all her things on, looking at nothing. I sat down beside her, and put my arm around her.

"Poor old Jane!" I whispered.

"I can't go on like this any longer," she told me. "I *can't*, Miss Molly. I don't mean to see 'im any more. Lies is good enough for some people; but there's some as you can't bear tellin' 'em to. An' one thing leads to another, an', when you've begun, you 'ave to go on with it. There's more as I tole 'im to-night; an' could 'ave bit my tongue out."

"Tell him the truth," I begged. "Say that you did it because you—liked him. He'll forgive you then. *I* would."

"You are a little angel on earth." She put her head down on my shoulder. "An' 'e's only a man—though 'e's a gen'l'man."

It always makes me feel deceitful

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when people think I am good, because I know how cross I feel sometimes; but, of course, I try not to show it.

"Men who *are* kind are kinder than women," I told her. "If he is like father, he will be *very* nice to you."

"'E won't. An' if 'e did, 'e'd look down on me all the rest of my life. It's no good arguin'. I won't do it. *I won't!*"

"Then what will you do?"

She caught hold of my wrist so tightly that it hurt.

"I'm goin' to—break it off."

"He'll ask the reason."

"'E won't 'ave the chance. I'm goin' to write to 'im. You'll 'elp me with the spellin', won't you?"

"It would be better for you to see him."

She laughed a funny laugh. "People don't always do wot's best for theirselves. I'm goin' to do wot's best for *'im*. I ain't good enough for 'im, Miss Molly; an' I ain't goin' to give 'im no chance of makin' a fool of 'isself, as 'e'd be sorry for afterward. Only, I don't want 'im to think too 'ard of me. If somebody would say a word for me—somebody wot 'ad the gift of persuadin' people!" She looked at me, appealingly.

"Father?" I suggested. Father is very clever, as well as good, and knows how to say things so that they seem different.

"You!" she said.

I drew a deep breath. "I can't say things like father can."

"You'll say the kindest things of me of anybody. You will, won't you, Miss Molly?"

"Yes, dear," I promised. "I will if you wish it. Now, go to bed."

I helped her to get to bed, and I turned down the gas, and went to the door. Then, I went back and kissed her. I knew that, if I were in trouble, she would be kind to me.

She wrote a lot of letters on Monday, and tore them up. Then, I wrote one for her. The spelling was quite right, because I looked out all the long words in the dictionary, and I took great pains with the writing; but she tore it up, like the others.

"It's a beautiful letter, Miss Molly," she said, "but it ain't *mine*. I won't make no pretense any more. He shall see as I ain't no account at spellin' or writin'. I won't go for to deceive 'im again." And the letter that she wrote was this:

DEAR CLORD:

Ive bin deseavin you. I am not eny ladie an never wasnt, only a girle. An I tole you lise an am awful ashamed of myself. But it wasnt no lise that I loved you and shant never care like it for nowun els.

Dear Clord I am not good enuf for you an your best without me so I wont never sea you eny mor an havent put the adres. Plese forgit alle about me but remember me sumtimes. So no mor at present or never.

From your fren,

JANE HARRIS.

P. S. I called myself Evlin de Vere.

P. S. Good-by! I am verry sorry for wat I done.

P. S. This is finel but dont think to hard of me.

Mr. Montmorency was to meet her by Lion Square, at seven on Tuesday evening, and I agreed to take the letter instead. I should know him, she told me, by his wearing a check cap, and carrying a cane with a gold knob. "Most like 'e'll be whistlin' 'Sally in Our Alley,' or 'Vi'lets,'" she added, as she saw me off at the door. "Sez it sets 'im whistlin' when 'e thinks of me! An' you'll tell 'im as I was orful sorry—You needn't worrit about *me*. I'll be 'avin' a fine game with the boys. I'm comin', Master Tommy. You—you'll speak kind of me, won't you, Miss Molly? I'll be better as soon as you've gone."

I thought she would, so I went. I cried a little, myself; but I was all right when I reached the square.

There was nobody there but a round-faced, grinning young man with a reddish mustache. He was walking up and down, and looking around as if he expected somebody. When he passed me for the third time, I noticed that he was whistling "Violets;" and he had a cane with a yellow knob, and a checked cap. It flashed across me that he was

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Jane's gentleman; and he wasn't a gentleman at all!

He caught me looking at him, and stopped; and I stopped, too. Then, he saw the letter in my hand.

"Beggin' your pardon, miss," he said. "Do you 'appen to 'ave a message from Miss de Vere?"

"You are Mr. Montmorency?"

"That's me. Ain't nothink the matter with 'er, is there?"

"She is well, but—" I stopped because I did not know what to say.

"Can't she come?"

"No-o. At least, she thought it better not to. There has been a misunderstanding about—your relative social position." I had made up my mind that this was a good way to put it.

"Ah!" he said; "so *that's* it?"

"Of course, position isn't everything. You may think it doesn't matter." He seemed a nice young man, but I did not think he was too gentlemanly for Jane.

He shook his head. "It matters a good deal."

"If you think that," I said, "I need not say any more." I was disappointed in him.

"Doesn't *she* think it matters?" he asked.

"Ye-es; but if you tried to persuade her——"

"Not me," he said, decidedly. "She's quite right—I don't deserve 'er."

"I don't think you do," I told him. "She is a very good girl."

"Girl!" he cried. "She's a lady, ev'ry inch of 'er!"

I looked at him in astonishment.

"Then, why don't you marry her?" I asked.

He stared at me. "I'll tell you, missie," he said, slowly. "It won't make me feel no worse'n I've felt this last three weeks. It's because she's a lady—an' I ain't."

"No-o," I agreed; "of course not!"

"But I tried to pass myself off as one—I mean a gen'l'man. An' she's foun' me out."

"But, Mr. Montmorency——"

He held up his hand. "That ain't my right name. It's 'Ammond—Bill 'Ammond. An' I ain't no gen'l'man, but in the greengrocery line. It ain't a bad bus'ness for the likes of me; an' I got a real good little moke of my own; but I could see as it wouldn't do for the likes of 'er. So I tole 'er—lies. I ain't no class, or I wouldn't never 'ave done it. Good night, miss."

He turned, and walked away so quickly that I was out of breath when I caught him.

"You haven't taken your letter," I said, "Mr.—Hammond. The address is Number 4, Elm Grove—the second house around the corner, if you want to see her." Then, I ran away.

Jane was taking the boys up to bed when I got home. I said that I would see to them, and sent her down-stairs. Before she reached the kitchen, I heard a knock at the side-door.

"Who's that?" the boys asked.

I listened for a moment. "Somebody for Jane," I told them. Then, I shut the door, and romped with them. It was great fun; and I laughed so much that I cried!

I did not go down to the kitchen till I heard the side-door close. It was an hour and three-quarters, and a few minutes over. Jane was running between the dresser and the table to get the supper ready, and smiling all over her face.

"The deceit of the man!" she said. "I give it to 'im proper, I tell you!"

"Oh!" I said; "then it's all off, I suppose?"

Jane grinned.

"You don't suppose nothink of the sort," she said. "An'—an' God bless you, Miss Molly, dear!"

She flung her arms suddenly around me, and kissed me. It was a great liberty—but I did not mind!

THE surest way to alter the sentiment of people who complain that they never get what they deserve would be to give it to them once.

July 1903

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A SUMMER SIREN

WE met beside the ocean,
In bathing-suits attired;
She smiled on my devotion,
I worshiped—and aspired.
My cup with joy was brimming
When she permitted me
To teach her fancy swimming,
And thanked me graciously.

It did not stop at diving
And sunning on the sand;
I dared to take her driving,
And even squeezed her hand.
I dreamed that in the city
My love I might declare,
And look with scornful pity
On all her suitors there.

But, lo! when I intruded
In her Manhattan set,
I might have been included
With those she'd never met.
The story needs no trimming—
I learned the difference grim
'Twixt Dorothy in swimming,
And Dorry "in the swim."

FRANK ROE BATCHELDER.

THE LAND OF CULTS

CRAWFORD—Why do Boston people seem to have so much individuality?
CRABSHAW—Perhaps it's because nearly every one you meet up there has a different religion.

WHEN Noah completed the ⌒
The beasts all made haste to emb⌒;
For a free ocean trip
On a seaworthy ship
Appealed to them all as a l⌒.

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ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY

By Guy Wetmore Carryl

ROBERT CONSTANCE, U.S.N., walked to the starboard gangway, and yawned without opening his mouth. This useful accomplishment had come to him in the course of much inutile conversation with the lights—and darks—of the United States Consular Service, and he studiously kept in practice. The little ceremony once accomplished, he swung upon his heels, strode to the port gangway, peered down, and swore under his breath, with ingenuity. One thing was evident. Dissatisfaction of some variety was disturbing the accustomed serenity of Robert Constance, U.S.N.

There was nothing, in either his position or his surroundings, to suggest what the cause of this dissatisfaction might be. It was a very enviable position, his, according to the average man's way of thinking, a very enviable position, indeed. Of course, one looks higher than a training-ship, but, on the other hand, there were those of Constance's own class who had been assigned to the *Katahdin*—to which all things are preferable. So, it may be said, without narrow-mindedness, that he was an extremely lucky young man, and that there was small excuse for yawning, and none whatever for profanity, however ingenious.

The *Springfield* was lying in the harbor of St. Thomas, homeward bound from her Winter training cruise in the Caribbean, and Bobby Constance was officer of the deck. It was a very big, long, broad, clean deck, and on it there were a great many bare-footed young persons in white duck, who, in due time, might do incalculable damage to others of like calling but different nationality, but who, at present, were chiefly distinguished by an infinite capacity for getting in the way. For an hour past, they had been energetically doing incomprehensible things with ropes and cutlasses and wig-wag flags and pistols and big guns. Now, for the most part, they were sprawling.

A subdued hum, as of a multitude of sleepy bees, hung on the still, hot air. Twenty feet from Constance, a prodigiously fat boatswain presided, as an arbiter of justice, over a dispute between a wizen-faced monkey and a spotted fox-terrier. At the foot of the port gangway, a dozen or more snub-nosed boats bobbed on the choppy water, the boatmen, with big, brass numbers on their straw hats, looking up toward the deck, and screwing up their eyes against the crinkling glitter of the waves, on the lookout for a possible fare. There was a smell of clean duck and newly-washed woodwork and brass polish; and Robert Constance, U.S.N., yawned again, shamelessly, with his mouth wide open, abandoning his former conservatism.

Mecarder was the last man in the world whom he expected to see. But that was the way with Mecarder. He went up and down the earth miscellaneously, finding out things, and cabling them, at impressive expense, to a two-story, triangular building in the heart of New York, whence they issued, next morning, in the form of

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double-leaded, front-page articles. After fifteen years of this sort of thing, there was not much left for Mecarder to find out. He knew everything that had already happened, and a respectable number of things that had not, but shortly would. As a result of his methods, when people said, "Mecarder's home again; saw him, week before last," he was, in all probability, engaged in pumping an ambassador at Vienna. When, on the contrary, people said, "Mecarder's in Vienna," he was very apt, at that moment, to be mounting the front steps, intent upon a friendly call. In particular, he was favorably known to the navy, and whoever is favorably known to the navy, has, at one time or another, rather more than his just share of the joys of life. Also, it was true that Mecarder occasionally took a vacation, which was not in the interests of his paper, and still less in his own.

Mecarder stopped his boatman at a little distance, and hailed the deck.

"Who are you?" he shouted. "Can't see you under your helmet."

"Constance," answered the officer of the deck. "Who are you? Oh—*well!* Good man! Come aboard."

Mecarder swarmed aboard, raising his brand-new panama in salute.

"Let's see," said Bobby, as their hands met, "Singapore, wasn't it, last time? Or, no—Gibraltar! How stupid I am! And I'll confess I'm surprised to see you here."

"You *are!*" laughed Mecarder. "You ought to know better than to be surprised at anything, where I'm concerned. The mustache is new, isn't it? That's why I didn't recognize you, at first. Who have you?"

"Wisby's the old man. Then, Carruthers—navigating officer, this trip—Henderson, Jimmy Carmichael, Veazey, Torrence, and a couple of others whom you know—we often speak of you—a new paymaster, Brackett—a good chap; and, of course, a pair of sprats, just out—all pin-feathers, as yet. What's the game now? Or is this another time when you're 'not at liberty to tell'?"

"Oh, nothing much. A bit of a vacation, that's all—looking up the flora, fauna, opinions of the natives, and so forth. I came down two weeks ago on the *Madiana*. Saw you passing in, yesterday morning; I was on Buck Island, shooting. So, I've come out, hoping to find some of the old gang aboard. You're from St. Croix?"

"Yes—going home. From here to Culebra, Puerto Rico, Havana perhaps, and then—God's country."

"Well, I'll be sending my card to the captain. See you later."

That night, at dinner in the wardroom of the *Springfield*, Mecarder gave an account of himself. He was extraordinarily attached to these earnest, clean-cut, confident men, who led a life as roving as his own, and made all things possible for Uncle Sam. It sent a little, pleasurable thrill, unobtainable elsewhere, down his spinal marrow to drink in response to their gladness at seeing him aboard. In this toast, there was no lack of sincerity on either side. Mecarder had done, and would do, much for the navy, and the navy was at all times prepared and pleased to repay Mecarder in his own good coin.

Now, they were remembering Manila together, to the confusion of the sprats, who supposed themselves important, and secretly resented Mecarder. At the end, the older men were left alone. Carmichael had been singing, and they all joined in the final chorus:

"Am I a man, or am I a tool?
Am I the governor-general or a hobo?
I'd like to know who's the boss of the show—
Is it Mac or Emilio Aguinaldo?"

"How that brings it all back!" said Mecarder; "only, Bobby ought to be here with his banjo."

Constance was dining ashore.

"Bobby doesn't play the banjo nowadays," said Carruthers, from the head of the table.

A significant little pause followed the remark. The men were very busy with their cigars, of a sudden. Only Mecarder looked up, sharply, searching the faces around him. He was no fool, Jack Mecarder!

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"What is it?" he said. "I can hold it as well as the next man. Give up!"

"Oh, we'll give up, readily enough," answered Carruthers. "You're one of us, Jack, as much as if you belonged to the mess; and as for holding things—humph! I should say you could! Well, we're worried about Bobby."

"It isn't money," observed Mecarder, as the other paused. "That I know—the lucky dog! And it isn't rum. He isn't only *on* the water-cart, that boy—he drives it! Well, who's the girl?"

"A snip of a thing at Barbados," said Carruthers, with a slight smile. "Bobby's gone, clean gone! There was no holding him while we were there. It was shore-leave and evening-dress B. every night. Since we left, he's been mewling like a sick apprentice, neglecting his work, snubbing us right and left, and, in general, behaving abominably."

"What's she like?" prompted Mecarder.

"Oh, pretty. I saw her once, and suspected the tar-brush; though, if I were to say as much to Bobby, he'd probably jump down my throat. Oh, curruption! It makes me sick!"

"It sounds trivial," Veazey took up the story, "but, somehow, there's more to it than flitting fancy, Mecarder. The boy's gone all to wrack. He isn't fit for publication. And that sort of thing gets one in trouble with the department quicker than winking. You know his record. He's been advanced five numbers twice. He's got the kind of thing before him that Dewey has behind—if war holds off long enough, and then comes, and then holds on! We've all been proud of Bobby, and now to have him go to pieces over a—well, for charity's sake, we'll call her a brunette!—is a hard knock. Why, he's——"

Veazey hesitated. "He's talking of quitting!" he blurted out.

"And coming down here to live," supplemented Carruthers; "and I've never known him to bluff. Think of it—Bobby Constance! In ten years, he'll be chewing cane as a business, and sampling other men's rum by way of relaxation! The question is, who's going to pull him up short, and how?"

Mecarder shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't do that!" protested Carruthers, "because you're elected by acclamation, Jack. When your card came down, Veazey said, 'Here's old Mecarder, come over into Macedonia!' And that's just about right. You know the boy, and all about him. He is never done talking about you. You're the necessary moral whalebone. Why, look here, man, the captain's sour on him—*on Bobby!* How's that for a transformation scene? The men are grumbling about him. Something's got to be done. When will you do it?"

"To-morrow," said Mecarder, as he took a fresh cigar. "When he gets back to-night, tell him I expect him to lunch with me at Mahoney's at one o'clock—and see to it that the captain lets him come."

Carruthers nodded. Carmichael, in exultation, swung round again to the piano, and immediately his fine, clear tenor filled the ward-room:

> "Take me somewheres east of Luzon
> Where our worst is like their best,
> Where there ain't no sundown liberty,
> And a man can wear a vest!"

"That's it!" said Carruthers, in an undertone, "that's IT!"

The next day, at luncheon on the gallery of the Hôtel du Commerce, Mecarder wormed it all out of Bobby Constance. It was Mecarder's business, was worming, and practice had made him perfect.

The gallery was big and tiled and not over-clean, and looked harborward, over the public gardens. There were three tables where was room for thirty. Mahoney himself—the inimitable, the wonderful Mahoney!—served the repast. As ever, his linen was immaculate, his manner the perfection of courtesy, his dark, well-kept hands assiduous in the service of his guests. There were bad bread, indifferent viands and good wine.

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Bobby had the worst of the bargain, as not touching the third which made the first two worth while, but he enjoyed himself immensely, and Mecarder enjoyed Bobby even more.

Below them, in the gardens, negro girls, with one eye on the balcony, came to draw water, disputed and chaffed, and departed, buckets on heads, with the long, easy stride to which they were born. A great hum of voices, and the smell of cane and pungent fruits and stale fish, mounted from the square, where market-women squatted in the shade of the white-washed buildings. From a tawdry little café across the way came the tinkle-tankle of a much-misused piano. Over all brooded an indescribable atmosphere of languor and laziness and indifference, and a suggestion of activity gone, never to return.

"It's *great*, isn't it?" said Bobby, stretching his long legs under the table, luxuriously.

"It is," assented Mecarder; "but what?"

"Oh, the restfulness, the ease, the don't-give-a-damnness of all this. You can't imagine how I love it. Yesterday afternoon, some of us went over to the German company's coaling-station across the harbor there, and the agent —what's his name now? Er-r-r— well, no matter. Anyhow, he showed us all over the place. He has a house that's a picture, and a garden that's a paradise. He takes his meals in the open air, all the year round, and bathes in the bulliest clear water I've ever seen or hope to see—with wire netting all around, to keep off the sharks. He has every kind of plant I ever heard of, and a lot more, besides. Every time he opens his face, a nigger kid pops out of the ground with a cold drink for him to tuck into it. He has plenty of money, and nothing much to do, and nothing at all to bother him. He doesn't care a green fig for what's going on in the outside world, and half the time he doesn't even know. He just lives on sunshine and fruit and perfume. It's heaven, Mecarder, that's what it is—just heaven on earth!"

"Well?" said Mecarder.

"Well, it's the life for me, that's all!" continued Bobby. "I'm *for* it, everlastingly. I'm sick of the service, Mecarder, and I want to settle down. I'm thirty-two, and I've found what I want. These two islands are the best ever. They've got me for keeps. I've had enough of ships and routine and travel. I've found the life that suits me, and the place, and it gets into your bones, this kind of thing. It's like 'Mandalay'—'you don't 'eed nothin' else!' Do you remember how we used to sing that at Manila, with American words? Well, I've never found what I wanted or even known what it was. But, when I saw that little place across the harbor, yesterday, I knew, fast enough! One could be happy, living like that—with a nice little wife."

"Provided one could prevail on her to leave the States," put in Mecarder.

"Oh, I know what you're hinting at," said Bobby, with a sudden frown; "but that's all off, long ago. I remember drooling to you about it, that night at Singapore, and how surprised I was to find you were one of her oldest friends. But, when I got back to New York, I soon saw it was no go. Let's see; you must have been in Cape Town then. Well, there was another chap hanging around, and no need to tell how she was heading. Of course, I had no claim on her whatever; but, somehow, thinking about her all the time out there in the East, I had come to imagine I had. I tried to assert it, and—well, never mind what she said. It wasn't the kind of speech that makes a man ask how soon he can call again! I was furious, at first, but now the sting has passed off a bit. That doesn't alter the fact that it has wrecked my whole life, however. After an experience like that, Mecarder, all a chap can do is to take the next best thing."

In some respects, Constance, U.S.N., was younger than his years.

"And *this* is the next best thing!" he added, suddenly sitting up straight. "So, you may expect to hear that I've quit the navy, shortly after we get

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back. Then, I'm coming down here to settle, either here or at Santa Cruz. I don't mind telling you I've a girl in mind. Nothing definite, you know. I haven't said a word; neither has she. But—oh, well, *you* know!"

There was a singular lack of enthusiasm in his voice, and, as he finished, his fine gray eyes slid over the palms in the public gardens to where, far out on the water, the *Springfield* lay at anchor. Then, his lip twitched.

"They'll be sorry to lose you, out there," said Mecarder.

"It can't be helped," said Bobby, without looking at him.

"Of course not. A man must shape his life as he sees fit. I wonder if Helen Dabney ever married the other man. I was in New York only two days last time, so I didn't pick up much news."

"I don't know. I suppose it's all fixed by this time. He was running strong when I left. She was wearing a ring of his—not on *the* finger, to be sure, but still—wearing it. He was a *Herald* man, too. They're not all such good chaps as you, Mecarder! His name was Endicott."

Mecarder narrowed his eyes, with an inscrutable little smile.

"Oh, Arthur Endicott! Then, of course, she *didn't* marry him, and never will. He's just been transferred to the Paris office at his own request, and indefinitely."

There was a long pause, broken by the uncouth jargon of some Danish officers at a neighboring table. Then, Bobby got to his feet, impatiently.

"It's thundering hot and stuffy here," he said. "Let's *do* something."

"We might take a drive," suggested Mecarder. "If you've not seen Villa Olga, it will be quite worth your while—particularly as you're thinking of settling here."

In the rickety open carriage, they swayed and rattled up the main street of Charlotte Amalia, and out on the hard, straight road beyond. To the right, the steep hillside ran up abruptly, baked and brown, and dotted with grotesque forms of cacti, aloes, tamarinds and bay-trees. To the left, through banana patches and clumps of cocoa-palms, the blue water of the harbor dimpled and twinkled in the sun. Above them hung the dome of the tropical sky, untouched by so much as a hint of cloud. They made the long, curving sweep out toward the Haul-Over, in silence. Mecarder was endowed with that best gift of the gods—the knowledge of when not to speak.

On the way back, he halted the carriage abruptly on the outskirts of the Cha Cha village, where men and boys sat in silent indifference, plaiting fish-pots at the doorways of their cabins.

"We'll drop off here for a moment," he said. "I want to show you something. This way."

Beckoning Constance to follow, he stepped briskly to the doorway of a tiny, ramshackle hut, and pushed aside a ragged curtain of cocoa-fiber. As he did so, a lean pig ran out and disappeared, and a half-dozen disheveled fowls squawked and flapped to a place of safety.

"Johnson!" called Mecarder. "*Oh*, Johnson!"

A half-breed woman, who was preparing an unsavory mess over something which showed signs of having once been a stove, looked around at the summons, and drawled an answer.

"'Tay-eent no use, mon. You art to know eet. He arl-ways der-unk."

She pointed to a heap of rags in one corner, whereon sprawled a man of sixty, or thereabouts, snoring stertorously. The wretched hovel reeked of greasy cooking, and was hideous with grime. The slattern in her tatters, the bits of cracked and broken pottery, the litter of slivered cane and cocoa-fiber on the floor, the rusty saucepan and tins, the sleeping man in his frayed and dirty linen—all were unspeakable! The very soul of Bobby Constance, the fastidious, sickened within him, and he was about to turn away, when Mecarder touched him.

"Come here," he said; "I just want you to see one thing."

He drew him to a position where they could see the sodden face and hear the thick breath of the sleeper

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more distinctly, and, bending down, suddenly drew back the loose sleeve from the man's right forearm, and raised the latter until the light from a little window struck full upon it.

"Can you make it out?" he asked.

Yes, Bobby could make it out. Upon the white flesh the blue-purple of the tattoo stood out, as distinctly as on the day when the words were first pricked in:

G. Johnson
U. S. S. Monongahela, 1867

Mecarder let the arm fall, and touched the sleeper with his foot.

"This thing," he said, "was once an American blue-jacket. He deserted after the wreck of the *Monongahela* in '67, the very year that's there on his arm. Sometimes, he's sober, or half so, and I've had a chance to talk with him. He's rather good copy. It seems he had good-enough reasons for deserting. He was sick of the service, and he'd found the life that suited him, and he thought he could be happy with a pretty little wife he'd picked out for himself. That's the pretty little wife," he added, nodding toward the slattern bending over her malodorous stew.

Bobby looked at him sharply, his lips tightening in a thin, straight line. But Mecarder's face was untroubled and calm as that of a contented child. He was looking down at the former blue-jacket with no expression other than that of faint interest.

"I think I shall write him up, one day," he said.

"Mash!" mumbled the man, turning in his sleep.

And, under his breath, "Good God!" said Robert Constance, U.S.N.

They dined long and late in the ward-room of the *Springfield* that night, and, under Mecarder's skilful manipulation, the conversation had much to do with men and things at home. Bobby Constance, who had sat for an hour with his chin in his hands, rose suddenly at half-after nine.

"Going to turn in?" asked Carmichael.

"No," said Bobby, shortly. "Get over at the piano, Jimmy. I'll fetch the banjo. It's the deuce of a while since we did any stunts."

As he disappeared into his cabin, Carruthers searched Mecarder with his eyes.

"You've been and gone—" he began, softly.

"And done it," said Mecarder, more softly still.

There was no need of more. They all understood—except the sprats. But that was not necessary. For there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in a sprat's philosophy.

Constance rowed Mecarder back to King's Wharf. He said he needed the exercise. Both knew better.

Behind them, the Southern Cross reared shimmering against the blue-black sky. Around, the water was greened and reddened by the lights of the *Springfield*, the Danish cruiser *Valkyrien*, and the tramps of the merchant marine. Ahead, the lights of Charlotte Amalia impinged upon the darkness.

"I wish you'd tell me why you're down here," said Bobby, abruptly. "Flora—fauna—I can't stand for that kind of tommyrot, you know!"

"One day, you'll know," said Mecarder; and, one day, Bobby knew.

They parted with a hand-grip that was more eloquent than words. But there were words, too, wrung as if by a grappling-iron out of Bobby Constance's conservatism.

"Whatever may be your reason for being in St. Thomas, I'm ripping glad to have met you here—er—Jack!"

That night, before retiring to the insufficient luxury of a Hôtel du Commerce bedroom, Mecarder cabled three words to his intimate friend, Miss Dabney:

"*Veni, vidi, vici.*"

Helen Dabney had graduated with honors—in Latin. Also, it was true that Mecarder occasionally took a vacation that was not in the interests of his paper, and still less in his own.

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THE SONG OF SIXTEEN

I AM so young, and the sun is shining
That has shone on millions of girls before—
They had their day of joy, or of pining,
Then went afar to some unknown shore.

But I—I am young—and Life's glad Summer
Is still for me, with its days unborn;
And Earth has welcome for each newcomer,
However it mock at the hopes outworn.

Poor souls, that lived and died and are done with—
You who were gay, in this merry world—
Do you ever recall the pleasures begun with,
Before the banner of youth was furled?

Let me make the most of the joys that woo me;
Now is my season to laugh and to sing.
Not yet shall Age and its chill undo me;
Not yet shall Winter its cold blasts bring.

The birds are blithe because it is morning;
Blithely they sing as the sun climbs high.
Like them I will laugh at Time and his warning;
I am sixteen, and my sun's in the sky.

LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON.

A DIFFERENCE

"SHE spends a great deal of money each season in entertaining, doesn't she?"
"No; in boring."

A DARK SECRET

FIRST POET—Do you think it pays to write poetry?
SECOND POET—I have been unable to find out.

PEOPLE never discover what a corrupt thing society is until they can't get into it.

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TRAFALGAR SQUARE

A COURT of spacious splendor. Fountains fret and spray;
And one great shaft of stone proclaims a hero's praises.
All round about reach out afar the town's thronged mazes.
But here is gracious room, for children at their play,
And room for men to rest amid the cares each day
Brings, newly burdening. The ceaseless traffic raises
A roar of rhythmed sound, a sordid song, whose phrases
All tone one bourdon theme of toil that lasts for aye.

A strange, stern, steadfast place, and one of proud repose;
Marred only by the mob that writhes in labor's throes,
The crowd that hastens ever, forced by want's harsh scourges,
With faces reeking folly, failure and despair.
From all who pass, scarce one of seeming mirth emerges.
And yet—such wrought this scene, so noble and so fair.

MARVIN DANA.

BOTH ECLIPSED

KNICKER—Truth is stranger than fiction.
BOCKER—Yes, and a historical novel is stranger than either.

GOSSIP

"ISN'T it perfectly awful?"
"Why, it's so bad it's hardly worth while exaggerating it."

TO THE PORTRAIT OF A BRUNETTE

HAIR dark as night, and eyes that beam afar
With the clear splendor of the evening star;
Lips where a smile, half-hid, begins to break,
Soft as the light on some Italian lake.

WILLIAM H. HAYNE.

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THE FATTED CALF

By Juliet Wilbor Tompkins

"OH, what do you think!" Florence Worth came running up the steps, plunging in unceremoniously on Mrs. Hazeltine's account of her Robbie's recent approach to the grave, and subsequent retreat from that locality during an attack of pneumonia. Mrs. Hazeltine had reached the point where the doctors had given Robbie up; she had one plump hand pressed on Helena Bancroft's knee in preparation for the climax, when Florence ruthlessly burst in on them, her face alight with news.

"*What* do you think!" she repeated, dropping down on the foot of Helena's steamer-chair.

Miss Bancroft was too courteous a spirit to look relieved at the interruption; indeed, she gave Mrs. Hazeltine an apologetic smile, as she turned to the newcomer.

"Well?" she said.

"Laura has come back!"

The effect was all the speaker could have hoped. Mrs. Hazeltine even forgot Robbie for the moment.

"Oh, not really!" they exclaimed.

"And is she still with that man?" Mrs. Hazeltine asked, in deep notes.

Miss Bancroft frowned, slightly. "But you know they are married, Mrs. Hazeltine; and have been ever since he got his divorce," she protested. Then, she sighed, perplexedly. "Oh, I don't see how she can do it—after all the talk and everything!" she exclaimed.

"She wrote some one they had to come, to straighten out his affairs." Florence was plainly enjoying the situation. "He could not very well move the mills, you see. Oh, won't there be talk!"

Helena shuddered. "I dread it! How I did grow to hate the topic, two years ago!"

"So did I," agreed Florence. "Wherever two or three were gathered together—it was always to rip Laura up the back. Well, when you run away with another woman's husband, what can you expect? Of course, she will be cut, abominably. Can't you see the Crofts and the De Wolfes and Mrs. McMurtry sailing past her? And old Mrs. Polhemus—she has just been holding on in the hope of one good crack at Laura before she dies. What will you do, Helena?"

"I don't condone what she did," said Helena, slowly; "but it seems to me she will have punishment enough—just having to spend her life with a man who was willing to desert a wife and child. They may be happy now, but sooner or later—I think I shall go to see her, and be as friendly as I can."

"Oh, good!" said Florence. "That was just what I was thinking. Why not be decent to her? I like Laura, anyway."

"I always said that Laura was not wicked at heart, only very weak," said Mrs. Hazeltine. "She had always been a nice girl before this affair—at least, so far as we knew."

"Absolutely a nice girl, Mrs. Hazeltine," Helena put in, quickly. "She was simply infatuated, and she did a crazy thing. That, in itself, is quite enough to be responsible for. I am afraid it is going to be very hard for her. Poor Laura!"

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"Well, of course, the way of the transgressor—" admitted Mrs. Hazeltine. "Still, I think one should pause before casting the first stone."

"Yes; it improves the aim," murmured Florence. Mrs. Hazeltine, not quite catching her drift, nodded approval.

"So I say," she assented.

"Where is she staying, Florence?" asked Helena, hastily.

"They have taken the Beekman house. Suppose we call on her tomorrow; will you?"

Mrs. Hazeltine heaved herself out of her wicker chair. "I think that is truly kind and Christian," she decided. "I am sure Dr. Smiley would not disapprove. Give poor Laura my love, and say that I, too, am coming to see her. Don't get up, my dear Helena; I must run on and make some other calls." And she went as briskly as her outer circumstances permitted in the direction of the De Wolfes'.

"She has gone to spread the glad tidings," said Florence, sinking into the deserted chair. "I know she was giving you Robbie Lost and Robbie Regained when I came up. Had she come to, 'Mama, if I should go to heaven——'?"

"Florence, stop!" interposed Helena, laughing, in spite of herself.

"Oh, well, she irritates me, that woman," protested Florence, shrugging away the reproof.

The gray-stone house of the Bancrofts, grave, wide and generous, with deep porches and scrupulous lawns, was, in a way, the climax of the avenue; and Helena herself, gentle, yet not too approachable, delicately pretty and exquisitely clothed, might have been called the social climax of the town. She was its best product in the way of breeding combined with prosperity, and her attitude on any point was not without weight. Her attitude in the specific matter of Laura was spread diligently by Mrs. Hazeltine all that Spring afternoon—her own charity miraculously increasing with every call, till there were actual tears in her eyes as she told Mrs. McMurtry her determination to stand by that poor, misguided girl, though the whole town cut her for it.

"She will receive punishment enough, having to spend her life with that man," she sighed, wiping her eyes. "They say he is nice to her now, but you can't tell! And then, nearly all her old friends will ignore her. You know what frightful things they said when it happened. And yet, to comfort and help the fallen——"

"You say Helena Bancroft is going to call?" interposed the practical voice of Mrs. McMurtry.

The next afternoon Helena pulled up her ponies at Laura's door, with a little sigh of nervous dread.

"I am so afraid we shall seem—kind!" she exclaimed. "It must hurt her, our coming, almost as much as our staying away would. Oh, Florence, she will hate to see us!"

"Well, she won't be any more uncomfortable than we are," said Florence, shaking out her skirts. "Do you suppose she will wear a little black gown and a turn-over white collar? They always do on the stage. Ring the bell, my dear. We're in for it, and there is no use worrying now."

They sat uncomfortably in the drawing-room while the maid went up-stairs, Helena pale with misery for Laura, and Florence betraying her discomfort by the irreverence of her whispered comments. There was a quick swish of silk in the hall, and then, as they caught hastily at self-possession and attitudes of reassuring cordiality, Laura came running in, with arms outstretched.

"Hello, girls!" she called, gaily.

Helena was conscious of a distinct shock as she returned Laura's kisses; but there was no time to analyze her feeling. Laura was chattering and laughing excitedly, holding a hand of each.

"It is so good to see you!" she reiterated. "Tell me about every-

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body. Is any one married or dead or born? Helena, you always did have the prettiest clothes in the world; I hate you for that lace collar. Florence doesn't wear lace collars like that, so she shall have a cup of tea. Isn't it funny I should be in the old Beekman house? You know how Clara Beekman and I disliked each other. I must say their taste in wall paper——"

Helena began to feel dazed. To respond with full cordiality cost her an effort, and she drew a breath of relief when Laura had called her last good-bye after the retreating ponies, an hour later. Florence kept a thoughtful silence for several blocks.

"Of course, it was bravado," said Helena, presently.

"I suppose so," said Florence. Then, she laughed. "We needn't have worked up so much tact," she said. "Laura was quite equal to the occasion."

"Yet, if you noticed, she did not make one reference to—her running away, and all that dreadful time," suggested Helena. "Perhaps, she couldn't, to us both. And yet it would have been natural——"

"Unless she didn't happen to think of it," said Florence, with reviving spirits.

A few days later, when Helena stopped at Laura's with some concert tickets which she intended to give her, she found Mrs. Hazeltine just going in with an armful of roses, and Mrs. McMurtry already there with an offering of a recipe-book. Laura's lively talk oppressed Helena, though she was ashamed of the feeling.

"I ought to be glad of her courage, not resentful of it," she upbraided herself, as she made her escape soon afterward. At the door, she met Mrs. De Wolfe, feeling for a card with nervous, black-gloved fingers.

"Oh, Miss Bancroft, you have seen her?" she whispered, with an exaggeration of caution that sent her eyebrows nearly up to her widow's bonnet. "It is so lovely of you to stand by the poor girl! I am sure it's an example to us all. So many people will be cruel and pharisaical; we must do what we can—a few of us who can sympathize with suffering and repentance."

"Yes, indeed!" murmured Helena, and hurried away.

She met it on every side during the next few weeks: "So many people will cut poor Laura, we must do what we can to stand by her. It is not our duty to cast the first stone!" And so, there were roses and baskets of fruit at Laura's door, and carriages to take her driving, and concert and theatre tickets. And then, Mrs. Hazeltine took the leap before which all had hesitated. She announced a party.

"I really think I ought to do something as a thank-offering for Robbie's recovery," she explained, to the unlimited delight of Florence, who happened to overhear. "I hope every one will be kind, and make it as easy for her as possible. I am giving it in the afternoon, so that I needn't ask that man. If we could all gather around poor Laura when she comes in, it would reassure her, and it would influence the others."

"We might carry her in on our shoulders," Florence suggested; but, fortunately, she was not heard.

Mrs. Hazeltine's drawing-rooms were crowded on the afternoon of the thank-offering. The town was in an anguish of pity and forgiveness, burning to extend a white-gloved hand of sympathy. A few stubborn ones had held out against the tide, even declaring that they would not go to the tea if "that Laura" were asked; but Dr. Smiley's sermon on "not a sparrow" had brought them in. Even old Mrs. Polhemus was there, though there was still something martial and unsubdued in the angle of her gold eye-glasses.

"It looks as if Hamlet weren't coming," Florence whispered, pausing by Helena when the tea was at its height. "You could cut the suspense with a knife. Isn't it uncanny?"

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Helena nodded, uncomfortably. Every one seemed to be waiting, with eyes on the door, and absent answers to absent questions. The tea and chocolate cooled in the dining-room; no one would leave the scene of action.

"Oh, I wish I could run away," Helena said, with drawn eyebrows. "It all offends one so, the——"

She broke off abruptly, and so did every one else as the portières were parted, and Laura appeared between them, smiling from under a white lace hat. It was the moment to gather about her, but no one moved as she swept down on Mrs. Hazeltine. There was a surface buzz of talk, but the real silence was unbroken, except for a slight snort from the direction of old Mrs. Polhemus. Laura took the agitated hand of her hostess, and smiled about her.

"You don't know how nice it seems to be here," she said, brightly. "This is my first party, you know, since I have been back. I think I shall have to give a tea myself—I never can get my calls paid up, otherwise. Oh, there are the Morton girls—I haven't seen them before—and dear old Mrs. Polhemus! I must speak to her. Why, Gracie Knowles, I didn't know you! How you have grown up!"

A strange chill began to creep over the spirit of the assembly. They had come to be nice to Laura, and suddenly it began to look as though she were being nice to them. Glances were exchanged under lifted eyebrows, and smiles grew a trifle sharp. Mrs. Knowles summoned Gracie abruptly to her side. It was one thing to stand by a suffering and broken Laura, and quite another to be greeted and encouraged by an apparently complacent Laura in a white lace hat. It might be bravado on her part. Nevertheless, the chill deepened. Groups began to drift away to the tea and chocolate. Laura put a confidential hand through Helena's arm.

"Isn't it stiff?" she murmured. If she understood, there was not a tremor in her voice to show it.

"Teas are always stupid. Suppose we go," suggested Helena, who was in misery lest the growing irritation should find words, and felt her heart sink every time old Mrs. Polhemus turned her glasses in Laura's direction.

"Let's have something to eat first," said Laura, leading the way to the dining-room.

The talk fluttered and fell, as they entered. Helena marveled at Laura's serene face as she made her way to the group about the tea urn.

"Very weak for me, please," she said. "No sugar, thank you, Carrie. Isn't this pleasant! I am going to give a party myself next week. Will you all come?"

No one answered. Florence tried to cover the silence with a laugh.

"I will, if you'll have as good cake as this," she said. Laura was looking in unmistakable surprise from one to another averted face.

"You are cross at me!" she exclaimed. "Why, what have I done?"

There was a panic-stricken silence, broken a moment later by a deep voice.

"What has she done?" Old Mrs. Polhemus stood in the doorway behind them, her hands crossed on her gold-headed stick. "There's a woman and a child who could tell what she has done, if they were here." Then, she turned and marched out of the house. The front door banged before any one spoke. Laura had grown rather white, but her lips curved, scornfully.

"The dreadful old woman!" she murmured, looking about, in evident expectation of sympathy. No one met her eyes. "Of course, she is of another generation and can't see things as we do," Laura went on, shrugging. "In time, every one will come to our point of view, and take life more simply. Thank heaven, we are moderns."

The smothered irritation of the afternoon flamed up in a dozen indignant pairs of eyes.

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"Well, count me out." It was the emphatic voice of Mrs. McMurtry that spoke. "I'm no modern, if it means making light of breaking the laws of God and man!"

"Nor I!" said several voices.

Laura looked bewildered. "I thought I might meet prejudice when I first came," she said, slowly; "but you all rushed to see me, and did things for me, so I supposed you were more enlightened than I had credited. And now—" She broke off.

"My conscience!" Mrs. McMurtry was red with anger. "We came because we thought you would be so ashamed you couldn't hold your head up without help; and we were women enough to be sorry for you. But it seems the suffering has all been on our side!"

Laura's amazed glance read confirmation in the other faces. She turned to Helena.

"Is that why you came?" she demanded, hotly. Helena flushed and paled.

"But I felt so very—friendly, Laura," she pleaded.

Laura wheeled abruptly. "Well, you needn't any more!" she said, and swept out of the room.

Florence slipped out after her, and put a hand through her arm as she hurried down the quiet street.

"The truth is, Laura," she said, with a little laugh, "they can't forgive your lace hat—it is too becoming."

Laura bit her tremulous lips. "Wasn't it ridiculous?" she exclaimed. "Surely, you don't take that primitive attitude, Florence!"

"Laura," said Florence, slowly, "at the end of my second Winter in Paris I was modern—oh, very modern! I, too, wanted to take life simply, and scorned the Philistine. But I find, as one grows older, one rather comes back to respectability and religion and all the good old things. Yes, I've grown hopelessly nice. I'm sorry."

Laura sighed, sharply. "Ah, well, it's from living in this little mudhole. What can you expect?" she exclaimed. "I should stifle in this narrow atmosphere, now that I have known something broader. I shall make my husband sell the mills—he has been talking of it—and take me away. And, if you are wise, you will escape too, Florence. You're too interesting a personality to be wasted."

"Oh, it's too late for me. I'm in it up to my neck," said Florence, gravely. "But you are young enough to escape, Laura."

"Yes, thank goodness," said Laura; but her voice was less confident, and, for a brief moment, her eyes were bewildered and half-frightened.

IN PROOF OF THE MAXIM

"FOR shame, sir!" she said, as she pushed back a curl
Much rumpled; "I had not the strength to resist!"
But please do not think I'm that kind of a girl—
Though I had the misfortune just now to be kissed!"

I was sorry, of course, I had caused her such pain
By a quick-dabbed caress, and, contrition to show,
I vehemently vowed, as I kissed her again:
"Misfortunes, dear, never come singly, you know!"

ROY FARRELL GREENE.

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WHEN SHE GOLFS

ADOWN the club-house steps she trips,
To play her game, arrayed
In all the fettle that equips
A golfer, and a maid;
With plaided bag, and clubs half-score,
With garb and eyes of blue,
With patent balls a goodly store,
And smiles and dimples, too.

And now upon the teeing plot—
"Must I go first?" she pouts.
"No; *you!* You've played, you know, a lot!"—
And flutters, pleads and doubts.
But see, awaits her tee; the ball
Is balanced on the sand;
Her bag she recklessly lets fall,
And bravely takes her stand.

She waggles—but some hampering fold
Demands adjustment, slight;
She waggles—but her ball has rolled
From off its little height;
She waggles—and a lock of hair
She deftly tucks—like this;
She waggles—and says: "I declare,
I'm sure that I shall miss!"

At last she swings ('midst other things—
A list my space scarce brooks),
The while a "Fore!" she sweetly sings—
And wonders how she looks!
And, though the ball may not skim far,
E'en never move a bit,
Who'll dare deny the chances are
That she has made a hit?

EDWIN L. SABIN.

GOSSIP OF THE TURF

VERY often it is the mare that makes the money go.

"HE died of cramps."
"Huh! I warned him not to live in a flat."

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FAYAL, THE UNFORGIVING

By Miriam Michelson

"THINK again, princess; this man who asks your hand is no petty king."

Wilburtha lifted eyes somber as black fire. "I do not like his face. Perhaps, the picture lies. But he does not please me."

The councilor inured to femininity said many things within himself. Aloud, he but began over again.

"Fayal is emperor over a domain so vast and mighty that your august uncle's realm is but a patch on a wheat-field compared to it."

Wilburtha played with the pure gold-pieces that hung enchained between her breasts, admiring, bit by bit, the rare workmanship on each, and indifferently letting it fall again.

"Our lord, your uncle, child, may marry again; and, if he does, a reigning princess, young and beautiful, will be your rival here where you have reigned supreme."

She raised a tiny hand-glass whose carved ivory back bore Fayal's face, and idly, insolently, contentedly gazed therein.

"A son and successor may even be born to him. You do not know, Wilburtha, what influence a young mother may have upon an old husband, hitherto childless. Your retinue, princess, is a costly burden to the prince. Think, extravagant and capricious as you are, of having to account to another—a woman perhaps younger than yourself—for every extravagant caprice."

Wilburtha stretched herself upon the cushions. Beneath the jeweled gauze that draped her perfect body, she lay superbly indifferent.

"And the world grows old, Wilburtha, and weary and fickle. Remember, princess, the opportunity to wed fittingly may not come soon again."

A smile of dazzling insolence parted her crimson lips, and her bosom fell with the weight of a noiseless laugh, as light as the fall of a magnolia leaf from the bud.

"This Fayal, now—to be frank, my lord the prince insists, Wilburtha——"

"Enough! enough!" So swift was the motion that undid her pose that for a second she seemed to be a flying whirlwind of glittering gems, of satins, and of ivory flesh. The jeweled mirror, whose ivory was carved in Fayal's likeness, fell to the floor, breaking with a crash, and the privy councilor jumped nervously from his seat.

Wilburtha looked from the shattered fragments on the floor to the councilor's face.

"I shall not—shall not—shall not! I shall not wed until I choose—perhaps, not at all. And never Fayal—never him—never—tell my lord. First, because I shall not, and second, because you wish it."

She turned her face from him, and her slender limbs melted again into the cushioned down till she looked like a jeweled mosaic done in glittering curves against a soft background rich in color, that rose to meet and engulf her loveliness.

The privy councilor stood looking down at her. Upon his face, from which her eyes were averted, was writ all that he might not say. Once, a slave girl whom she had beaten had

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sought to poison Wilburtha; before the girl had left her presence she had looked upon her mistress with such an expression as the councilor's face now wore.

The rustle of a silken gown broke in upon his reverie. He glanced up, his guilty features quickly assuming their inexpressive immobility. He saw the archbishop, and read displeasure and dismissal in his face.

"You are right, my child," the ecclesiastic murmured, as he stooped to pick up the shattered mirror while the curtain fell behind the departing councilor.

Wilburtha turned and faced him. "I know I am," she said; "or, rather, I knew I was before your grace agreed with me."

He was piecing together the shattered bits he held, with his long, delicate, insinuating fingers.

"You must let me take this mirror to a skilful workman in ivories," he said, softly, preoccupied, as though he had not heard her words. "The pattern is so rare, the cutting is so deep and intricate, it were a pity if——"

"I am fond of it though it does bear Fayal's face," she said, regretfully. "Do you know its history, your grace?"

He shook his head.

"It comes, of course, from Fayal's palace, the one bit of royal carving that ever got beyond the frontier. A lover who wearied me with his protestations demanded at last a test to prove his passion. I suggested a Fayal ivory and he brought—or, rather, sent, me this."

The archbishop lifted his eyes from the piecing in which he was absorbed. They were wonderful eyes. One saw them rarely. Their expression filled the pause that followed like both a question and a response. Yet, Wilburtha completed her account.

"Yes, he was burned alive the other side of the dividing line, and his ashes were scattered to the winds just over the frontier."

There was another pause. The archbishop's finely modeled hand—like a piece of sentient ivory itself—was busy with the precious fragments he was arranging in his palm. The girl stirred, restlessly. Without an upward glance the archbishop spoke.

"I understand, my child; I understand."

"You understand—pray, what?"

"Your love—your hate, Wilburtha."

She smiled, contemptuously disdaining enlightenment; and yet, his words rankled.

"Then is your comprehension far greater than my own, your grace," burst from her, at length; "for Wilburtha honors no man by hating or by loving him—neither for burning nor for being burned."

"Tut, tut, my child! An old priest is naught but ears that forget and eyes that may not see. You may be frank with me. How terrible he is—Fayal, the Unforgiving."

"Fayal, the Unforgiving!" She repeated the name, musingly. "Is that what men call him?"

"Not in his own dominions, but elsewhere, where his terrible power may not reach. Yet, even there, having offended, they tremble and start at every step, fearing some subtle, far-off manifestation of his dread self."

She turned upon her pillows, nestling her cheek upon the palm of a hand that completed the purpose of her shapely arm as a calla completes the lily's stalk.

"Of him it has been told that he never forgives; that man may not live long enough to outlive his wrath; that, young as he is, no resting place is in his soul for peace or happiness or pleasure till an offense against him is expiated."

"Yes?" said Wilburtha.

The archbishop dropped a bit of ivory, and picked it up again.

"The awful might of his name has beaten armies ere they went forth to battle against him. He knows no mercy for a sin against himself. And that man sins who pits himself against the emperor in deed or word or thought."

"Yes?"

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"Yet, if it were not for the terrible majesty of his cruel name, men might tell other tales of Fayal—of his magnificence, of his greatness, of his surpassing personal strength, of the miracle of his military glory, of the keenness of intellect which makes playthings of the wit and wisdom of those old ministers who would guide the young emperor, yet who live only to fulfil his will."

"Yes?"

"The churchman has only sternest reprobation for his relentless, unforgiving spirit——"

"Yes, yes?"

"—but the man in the churchman must recognize, with something like admiration, the marvelous qualities in this young Cæsar, who, but for the blot upon his fair fame——"

"Oh—yes?"

"As I said, princess, your instinct was right. You do well to refuse this man, for——"

"Yes, yes! But what were you about to say of him?"

"Nothing further, child, save to congratulate you on your escape."

"Say more, your grace! ah, say more! You have seen him—yes?"

The archbishop's cool old hand trembled under her touch, and the sweetness of her voice—that voice which he had never before heard pleading—sought and found him.

"I saw him at his coronation. He has a face and figure that fit his fame. When first my eyes beheld his stripling strength and suppleness, his kingly bearing, though a lad, the untamed majesty of his glance, and when I heard of how he had taken his place, and set his foot upon the necks of those who had thought to shape and mold his temper——"

"Yes! yes!"

"—that time I said to myself, all ignorant, princess, of the malignant cruelty, the ruthless wickedness that makes his name and mars his fame——"

"Yes?"

"—I said—your pardon, princess——"

"Yes, yes!"

"I said, 'God has created Wilburtha's fate!' I never saw a spirit bold and strong as yours before—nor since. Alas!"

She turned again. Her hand fell lightly, and her bediademed head sank backward. She stretched herself upon her cushions as though every nerve were bathed in balm.

"I sigh, Wilburtha, that this unforgiving prince will turn his enmity upon the one who has rejected his love. I sigh that his great genius, all misdirected, is sure mightily to be put forth against our lord, this unhappy realm and—and you, my child. I sigh— Alas! alas!"

"You need not, your grace." Her slow lids fell, as she lay outstretched, and her voice was dreamily sweet. "I shall marry this Fayal—Fayal, the Unforgiving."

With a deft movement of his little finger, the archbishop pushed the last bit of broken ivory in its place. Perfect satisfaction was written upon his countenance.

II

THE jeweled stole of gold that Wilburtha wore, broad, fine-linked and softly wrought as satin, extended in lace-like fringes to the very border of her petticoat of gauze-of-gold. Behind her trailed the long, white mantle of the bride. Of all the gleaming grace of glory she appeared, no trace of color could one see save white and gold—unless it were the pomegranate beauty of her lips, the blue-black masses of her hair.

She walked with downcast eyes, and all the court that had been filled with rumors of her pride, gazed upon her beauty, unrebuked.

She walked alone through the silken silence of the strange court, for none that owned not Fayal's sway might witness his taking of a bride, his making of an empress.

Yet, her sandaled feet never faltered. Her bosom's rise and fall was rhythmic as a southern sea. She

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seemed a bride of gold and marble, save for the majesty and grace with which she moved.

"A riddle—this!" The emperor's prime minister, old Agatroyd, spoke under his breath. His wrinkled lids scarce lifted from his aged eyes; he looked and pondered, uneasily. "What manner of woman is this?" he asked his great-granddaughter. "Does she feign serenity, you think?"

The young girl looked, and hated.

"Insolent!" she whispered. "Would you know what her whole bearing says? Listen: 'You, none of you, are worthy of a glance. I scorn to be curious even about this court which shall be mine. The magnificence of Fayal's palace, the beauty of the women, the valor and renown of the men —all, all are nothing in my eyes, for I disdain to look.' This is what she says. Insolent! Fayal will tame her, and then——"

"Hush! hush! Your eyes are young but they are clouded with envy. See, she meets the emperor. Now, she looks. What's in her eyes? What's in her eyes? Fayal alone can tell."

Wilburtha raised her orbs, and beheld that which their vision had been kept virgin for.

Above her, on the throne steps, where the strip of cloth-of-gold had its source, the great emperor stood. Slowly, her gaze climbed upward from his body, tense, immovable and shining in a golden suit of mail, every link of which was diamond-set, to the rigid features underneath the crown, and the inscrutable eyes which met her own, impassive now as they must have been all the time she had been walking forward along the strip of cloth-of-gold that flowed like a path of glory leading her to him.

They looked into each other's eyes. He saw the fear of him that dwelt unacknowledged in her soul in that one glance; and then, her lids fell.

Not once again during the ceremonies, not even when Fayal's hot hand locked the wedding circlet about her throbbing throat, and cast the tiny golden key into the crucible's fiery flame which melted it away, nor when, at last, he placed the crown upon her massed curls of ebony, did her soul look out again. And, when the emperor dismissed his court and withdrew with his bride, none but himself had seen her eyes.

They stood alone together; she, immovable before him; he, his gaze bent fixedly upon her.

"Wilburtha!"

Startled, she raised her head. That voice had not the accent she awaited. Something in it recalled to her the pictured face in ivory upon her mirror's back.

He laid a hand upon her shoulder, and, lifting her face to his, he said: "Look up—look long at me, Wilburtha."

A passion of inquiry shone in the great, black eyes she lifted to his face. He bent and kissed them closed again. She shrank away, and he let her go.

"What name do you know me by, Wilburtha?"

"Fayal, the Unforgiving!" She cried it out, defiantly.

"You have heard of the fate of the city of Tekalis?"

"It was immolated—the whole city buried alive, and not one of its thousands escaped. A mountain rears its head where once it flourished."

"Because it offended Fayal."

"Because it offended Fayal."

"You know of the country of the Whittites?"

"It was a garden of earth. The sea has been let in upon it. Sometimes, at low tide, one may guess what it once was. But, when the ocean resurges, the tallest trees that grew there are not as high as the sedge grass that blows above it."

"Because——"

"Because it offended Fayal."

"You know, too, of Moriway's execution, of the destruction of Quaribrar, of——?"

"All—all—I know all."

She had listened while the archbishop had told the dread tale, but, in the very presence of the man who had done such things, she felt emotional,

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unnerved. She could not bear a repetition—and the threat she fancied behind it.

"You know all?"

"Yes, all."

"And so do I—now."

"You! now! now!"

"Now," he said. "I heard it from a woman who had been tortured so near to death that in a frenzy of hunger for it, she escaped from the torturers, and thrust herself in my presence, and spat the tale in my very teeth, hoping that I might have her killed for it."

"I do not understand," she said, bewildered. "Till then——?"

"Till then, I did not know of it; nor had I ever heard the adjective the world has added to my name—the designation which will be mine through the centuries."

Upon her face, the emperor read amazement, incredulity. He took her hand, and held it close within his own.

"Wilburtha—that men for centuries to come shall curse my name, shall tell with bated breath the infamy of deeds accredited to me—this must I bear, this can I bear, if one, just one upon this living earth, and that one you, Wilburtha, my wife, shall know the truth—and me."

She looked at him as in a dream.

"Ever since the ambassadors came back with your consent, I have seen you, Wilburtha, walking as you did to-day up the long hall to me. And ever since that day I have imagined in your eyes the look I dreaded to see there—the look they had when first they rested on me—that awful look of fear!"

Her hand fell from his.

"I swore, when first Agatroyd broached marriage to me, I would not wed to have a child carry upon his heart the load of being son to Fayal, the Unforgiving. I swore I would not see upon my wife's face that look with which the whole world faces me. But when he told me of you, Wilburtha, of your haughty pride, your will, your power over men, I thought—I dreamed your eyes might meet mine and have no fear—even though you knew."

She stood before him, dumb.

"You see, I erred. But let me tell you how it was. My ministers are men who shaped my future before my birth. They are old, old—so coldly, cruelly old as not to seem any longer of this world. Like survived monsters of another age, they seem to look upon this world from out cold, rheumy eyes, whose drooping, wrinkled lids veil nothing left that is human. So old, so old they are that nothing lives of them but will. Their limbs wither. Their children's children die. They have no meeting-place with life. They have no vices. They have no virtues. The world, my people, and myself are figures in a problem they work out with such dispassionate inhumanity as never chills or heats their calm, dead blood. They were old when my father was born. And yet, they live and rule through me. The mistakes their human fallibility made in my father's reign they correct in mine, rubbing out a people from their map, drawing a death stroke through a man's life as carefully, as scientifically as though the result of their calculations were to be measured in chalk marks instead of beating, human hearts. They kill, they torture, they punish—relentless, unangered, unfeeling. They make my name synonymous with terror, having decided that a figurehead is more potential when it is a thing of horror; and also being coldly, scientifically interested in working out the problem, this time along different lines. My father was The Tender. I am The Unforgiving. As an experiment, they set his image in the hearts of the people, working through the tender mirage they themselves created. They bear me like a bloody axe throughout the world, and kill and slay and crucify in my name—the name they gave me. My father was no saint, and I—I, Wilburtha——"

He stretched out appealing hands to her, as she stood staring dumbly at him.

"I—that Fayal whom men fear and

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women execrate—the real I is fashioned of such material that it irks me to bid a slave do this or that, for the very reason that I have the power so to do. It shames me even to probe sharply into a dereliction, for the pitiful consciousness I have of the character and circumstances of him who has failed. Men are what they are. What are men to judge them? I would rather bleed at every pore than put my most savage enemy to death. I could give my body to the torturers, and pray that it might endure everlastingly, if the sharp, iron teeth might be glutted and clogged with my flesh—and so keep others' whole. I know of no crime, however terrible, inhuman, that merits revenge. I know no greatness that will compensate for one woman's agony over her slain husband. I know no glory whose shine is not dulled and blackened forever if a child's heart has been made to beat thickly for one terror-stricken instant—to attain it. There is nothing fine enough in life to outweigh, to wash out the reproachful misery in a dying horse's eye. I could not kill with my own hand; I could not will that one be killed, even though he had done the foulest wrong—to you, Wilburtha."

His voice melted into a sob as he fell upon his knees, his arms clasped about her, his face uplifted in passionate entreaty.

Her body drew away from him rather by an involuntary physical contraction than a conscious, definite motion. A slow wave of repulsion seemed to shiver over her from sandaled feet to crowned head.

He rose, and walked toward the door.

"In time, perhaps," he said, slowly, "you may believe, and you may forget the things done in my name for those that I would do—that I might do if you and I— Ah, if that time comes, when everything that is sentient in your body and your soul cries out for me as all that is in me cries out for you—come to me, Wilburtha!"

The curtain fell behind him.

She stood rigid, looking after him. But upon her face there grew a scorn that might have withered anything that passed before it; and then, her composure broke.

"A puppet—a thing of straw—a suckling coward—and my husband!"

Her wrathful wail ended in a sob, and she fell prone, her tear-stained face to earth, the splendor of her raiment emphasizing her abasement.

"The emperor has sent me to your majesty." It was the voice of Agatroyd's great-granddaughter that broke upon her passionate sobs.

Wilburtha raised her head. The malice in the woman's voice fell heavy on her haughty heart and cooled it. She looked from this envious pleasure in her humiliation to the wonder in the face of the old man who followed, and who bent to help her to her feet.

"A dread, dread lord is Fayal," whispered the lady-in-waiting, audibly. "Help her, grandfather, to earn Fayal's forgiveness for her maiden reluctance to come to him. It is doubtless this which he so terribly resents."

The old man did not speak, but his gaze dwelt scrutinizingly on Wilburtha, as though to surprise, to anticipate her very thoughts.

"But, alas! it is not in his nature to show mercy," chanted his granddaughter's mocking whisper. "Already, through the court, they tell of how his haughty empress, the beautiful, wilful Wilburtha, lies alone in tears upon her bridal day."

Wilburtha wrenched her hand from Agatroyd's.

"And already this latest proof of his cruelty spreads panic among his enemies." The prime minister, with the grave, slow significance of his utterance, stopped the words that trembled on Wilburtha's lips.

A storm of passion blew across her face. He watched it and its subsidence before he spoke again.

"Yet, as I read her nature, Wilburtha would be empress of such an emperor rather than be known as wife to a weakling, puling prince, upon whose neck she might set her haughty

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foot, and parade his uxorious serfdom before a sneering world."

A flash of comprehension swept over her face. She looked deep into his old, cold eyes. And he looked back again.

"The empress is wife to—" he began, putting out a withered hand.

"I am wife to Fayal, the Unforgiving," she cried, grasping it with her warm, young strength.

The lady-in-waiting looked upon them both with awe, the mocking smile frozen upon her lips. Old Agatroyd's wrinkles were a shade less deeply cut, and Wilburtha stood again erect, her haughty self.

"Men marry women for what they are, hoping they'll be what they are not," sang Xanthoridon, who chants the glories of Fayal's reign.

Women wed men for what they're not, dreaming they'll be not what they are.

PRESCIENCE

WAS there any sign that came to her
Ere the dream was a certain thing?
Nay—she but thought she heard the stir
Of the closed buds blossoming.

Was there any sign that she knew at all
Ere the false little dream took wing?
Nay—she but thought she felt the fall
Of a snowflake in the Spring.

JOHN WINWOOD.

HE GOT EVEN

WIFE—Oh, John, you've waked the baby!
HUSBAND—Serves him right. He kept me awake all last night.

BRIGGS—Yes, bridge is very much like the game of life—so much depends upon your partner.
GRIGGS—Yes, and that is why so many go broke at it.

HE—If I should throw my arms around your neck, kiss you and implore you to be my wife, would you scream?
SHE—Yes—for a stenographer.

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THE VOICE O' LOVE

IT was Love who called me, a morning in the meadow,
"Come out, sweetheart! come out, sweetheart, the Spring is in the land!
All the world is wonderful with dappled sun and shadow,
Here I wait with happiness held close in either hand."

Oh, I brake my spinning off,
Eager to be free.
Duty frowned beside the wheel,
"Do thy work!" quoth she.

It was Love who called me, at noontide in the greenwood,
"Come out, sweetheart! come out, sweetheart, and in the silence rest.
Take thy ease beneath the leaves, as softly as a queen should,
Both my arms about thee, and thy head upon my breast."

Oh, I raised my weary hand,
Longing, wistfully.
Duty set the wheel astir,
"Do thy work!" quoth she.

Through the gloom of twilight, the nesting birds were calling—
Oh, sick at heart, I turned the wheel, whom none might summon more,
When, like touch of rain in May, came sound of swift feet falling,
And Love stood beside me there where Duty was before.

"Since thou cam'st not at my call,
Sweet, I come to thee.
I am here to turn thy wheel,
And aid thy task," quoth he.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

MRS. A.—I have traveled all over Europe, in the hope that my daughter would meet some foreign nobleman.
MRS. B.—Why didn't you travel all over America?

"I HAD no idea that Mrs. Pacer was so romantic."
"What did she do?"
"Why, she ran away from home and got divorced."

CHAPPIE—I don't think I shall marry Marjorie.
FRIEND—Wise girl!

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BLUE BLOOD

By G. B. Burgin

THE octogenarian Lady Fontenoy always breakfasted in bed; she also received visitors there on the plea that it was an old-time Italian custom which had its economical advantages, and saved wear and tear of her one black-silk dress. Besides, she felt more at home in bed, and could always feign sleep when visitors bored her. The vicar had a deep-seated conviction that she never woke up. If she wanted to get rid of local magnates, she ostentatiously made a point of going to sleep, although the results were not picturesque. As a matter of fact, there was no necessity for her to economize by stopping in bed; but she was convinced that it was her duty to save money for her son, Sir Harry, who always left business details to her. He was the only living male representative of the oldest family in England, and his mother held that it would be a disgraceful thing to allow him to work for a living; such blue blood must be worshiped from a distance. She lowered her own vitality in her attempts to raise money, and never let him know how near she was to penury. Sir Harry, however, always refused to take money from his mother, and led her to infer that he won a precarious income at bridge. In this sole instance, even her iron will had to bend to his. So, she stayed in bed, and spent most of her time in sorrowing over the faded glories of her house.

Once, Sir Harry broached the subject of work, but she nearly had a fit. "When heaven summons me hence," she said, with the air of one who would rather tolerate than encourage so uncalled for an impertinence, "you may do what you will. I shall be busy elsewhere—doubtless engaged as befits my rank—but, until then, you will remember the motto of our house—'*Noblesse oblige*.' Don't argue with me, for I won't listen to you. You might as well try to argue with the jackaws on the ramparts."

"Oh, I'm not going to argue, mother," said Sir Harry, with a sigh. "Life and your temper are too short to admit of argument. You always begin your argument with a repartee, and I can't live up to you."

To do him justice, Sir Harry did not want his mother's money. "Get up out of bed, mother, and I'll trot you over to Monte Carlo or Ostend for a little flutter," he urged, when they finally discussed the subject.

But Lady Fontenoy declined to flutter; she said that she had molted all the feathers out of her wings, and that the attempt to flutter would result in her landing on *terra firma* with a broken collar-bone or a torn silk dress. "And you know," she added, "we must save money to repair the castle, not waste it on repairing ourselves. Besides, you are perfectly aware that it would be ridiculous of me to trot. Think of the castle, and economize."

"The castle, mother! Oh, bother the castle! Why, there are only four sound rooms in it. I believe the place was built on a quicksand. What with repairing these moldy old walls, and getting that gorgeous green-and-gold livery for Judkins every year, there's nothing left over from the—the estate."

"My dear"—the old lady sat up in

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bed, as he brought her chocolate—"my dear, we nearly conquered England once for ourselves. An ancestress of ours—I don't mind admitting in confidence—there was no scandal, mind you—that Norman William—eh—thought a great deal of her."

"Well, there's no doubt that England has conquered us, eh, mother?"

"*Noblesse oblige*," repeated the old lady, firmly. "What do we see around us?"

"Dashed spiders!"

"You must remember that the spider is an aristocratic insect which dwells in kings' palaces."

"Well, mildew and cobwebs aren't anything to brag about. I never heard of people being proud of spiders before."

"Pshaw! You are a degenerate, my son. You know whose blood is in your veins?"

"Ye-es, mother. You—you're not going to tell me there—there has been a mistake somewhere, and that it's—it's evaporated. Don't say that I have been changed at nurse."

The old lady reassured him with a smile. "Whatever the inner history of that affair with Norman William, the papers of the period did not get hold of it, and, so far as I am concerned, I have always remembered *Noblesse oblige*. I may be a ruin within a ruin; but I am not a jerry-built ruin, Harry. We were great people once."

"We were that," said Harry, with relish; "and we had a great time, too—some of us; the rest of us are paying the bills. If we hadn't been quite so great, I should have more money to spend."

"Your ancestors," the old lady became animated, "ruffled it with the best. Kings have borrowed from them."

"Borrowed what?"

"Money, of course," said the old lady, hastily. "*Nob*——"

"Ah, now, mother, remember that ancestress! Weren't they rather a fishy lot?"

"Who? The kings?"

"No; our ancestors."

"Fishy! They were not fishermen. Their—their eccentricities never exhibited that particular form of mendacious insanity."

"Nor mine, either; but I took the miller's little girl fishing the other day, and, by way of an opening, remarked that Dr. Johnson had once said that, when people went fishing, there was a worm at one end of the line and a fool at the other. 'Well,' said the miller's little daughter, 'you're not the worm.' Neat, wasn't it? I'd like to know that girl when she grows up, if I weren't already—" He stopped, in confusion.

The old lady regarded him, severely. "Though we have fallen on degenerate times, there is no reason that our habits should match them," she said, crisply. "In the old days, we did not go fishing either for, or with, millers' daughters. They—eh—went with the estate. Harry, remember, that once a grand seigneur, always a grand seigneur. If you are poor, your blood isn't."

"My dear mother!"—the good-looking lad—he was fair and six-feet-two in his stockings, a son of Anak—looked tenderly at her—"my dear mother, you never allow me to forget it. I'm an anachronism nowadays—a thing that ought to be stuffed with sawdust, and put in a museum, like Mark Twain's blue jay."

"No, Harry, no; you are no jay. Your blood is as blue as——"

"Skim-milk. I'm blue myself, sometimes. Dashed blue! Our blessed ancestors were a bad lot. They gambled and drank and ran away with other people's wives, and mortgaged everything up to the hilt, until we have come down to this. We must accommodate ourselves to circumstances. We sha'n't get any other accommodation."

"My dear"—the old lady sat up in bed, and adjusted her gaudy cap with the air of a judge sentencing a man to instant execution—"my dear, it is our duty to stand aloof from the mushroom throng."

"Look here, mother, mushrooms are

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dashed good things in their way. You try them in a pie, with a touch of——"

"Oh, in their way—yes; but their way is not our way. We are the oaks under whose shelter they presume to grow. Do you think, Harry, that the Creator would not be grieved if He thought that we were unmindful of our position as the premier family in England? Do you think, when He has given us so unspeakable a privilege, that it would be right for you to make a *mésalliance* and throw it away? Our blood is all that is left to us. If you do not marry blood, the race must die with you."

"Do you mean to say I'm not to marry?"

The old lady considered. "You might, perhaps, marry money; but if you cannot marry money *and* blood, the line must die out. It is a duty you owe to your house. For you to marry a modern girl, would be like drinking champagne with Apollinaris; it may be healthful, but the crowd do it; and we must lead, not follow, the crowd."

"Oh, if you're going to crowd me out, mother——!"

"It simply does not admit of argument. *Noblesse oblige*. You have my permission to leave me, Harry."

The young fellow kissed her. "Arbitrary old tyrant!" he said, fondly. "I'll go into a Trappist monastery if you're not careful."

"Don't disgrace me by doing anything of the sort. People mainly go into a Trappist monastery because they can't hold their tongues; that's why I'm so surprised there are never any women there," said the old lady, fiercely; and Harry went out. Sometimes, he could not help wishing that his mother had had a monastic training, for her tongue was never idle.

Left alone, the old lady rang for Judkins, who came, green-and-gold livery and all. One part of the castle —the inhabited portion—was divided off, so as to be inaccessible to tourists. Sir Harry was supposed to be unaware of the old lady's object in decking out Judkins with gorgeous livery. The latter took visitors around the ramparts at two-and-six a head, and thus, in the course of the year, accumulated a handsome sum which he handed over to his mistress with scrupulous fidelity. Fortunately for the revenues of Fontenoy, there was a certain choice dungeon left in the castle, with a complete, though somewhat primitive, iron apparatus, once used by Norman nobles for extracting teeth from Jews to whom they owed money; this, in bygone times, seemed to have been the primitive Norman fashion of giving a receipt. Curiously enough, the fame of so barbarous a relic of the past had spread all over the world, and children of Israel came from many countries to see a machine which invariably proved to possess so strong a fascination for them that they offered large sums for it. The ingenuous, and ingenious, Judkins—he was a bit of a mechanic in his spare time—taking advantage of the craze, had a stock of duplicates artistically manufactured by himself, and did a thriving trade in this instrument of torture, each purchaser fondly believing that he alone possessed the original. Lady Fontenoy, an innocent participator in the fraud, made at least a couple of hundred a year in this nefarious manner, and hoarded it. Judkins lived only to minister to her will and pleasure. There had been a John Oldkins in the time of Norman William, a villein on the estate. His descendant was still a villain, but Time had gradually contracted the "John Oldkins" into "Judkins." Centuries of obedience had also made him a mere puppet. The autocratic old lady bent him like a reed. If she had told him to cut his throat, he would have done it. Now, she commanded him to bleed tourists instead of bleeding himself, and he did that equally as a matter of course, eying his rusty old tooth-extractor with a sigh of regret that the milk-and-watery laws of the realm prevented him from once more turning this barbaric remnant of medievalism to its past profitable uses. He had an idea that tax-collectors and water-rate men

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might be made as profitable as the usurers of old.

Judkins appeared in answer to the bell, with the methodical accuracy of a machine. "How much to-day, Judkins?" his mistress suspiciously inquired.

"Two pun' seven, your ladyship." Judkins handed her his leather bag.

She counted the money carefully, and was about to put it away in a strong box which Judkins dragged from under the bed, when she suddenly espied a doubtful coin, bit it to make sure, and threw it to him. "A bad sixpence! If this happens again, I shall stop it out of your wages," she said, severely.

Although Judkins never received any wages, he heard the threat with well-feigned terror. "It sha'n't never happen again, your ladyship," he said, humbly; "but some of them tourists 'ud take in Old Harry himself, they're that artful."

Lady Fontenoy's cap slipped over one eye. She jerked it fiercely back again.

"Judkins, you know the duty you owe to my house?"

"Yes, m'lady."

"I don't mind telling you, Judkins, that I am uneasy about your master. He doesn't know how badly off he is, and yet I can never find out how he spends his time. He's never here, except in the Summer. How does he contrive to dress so well? Do you know if he dares to do anything for a living?"

"No, m'lady."

"And he doesn't know that you take money for showing the place?"

"No, m'lady."

"The things he doesn't know, amaze me. Some day he will find out, Judkins. Then, he will thrash you for disgracing us. I dare not face him."

"Yes, m'lady."

"Will you take the thrashing, Judkins? Your master has a right to hang you with his own hands should he choose to amuse himself in that way. The right is only in abeyance. It still exists, you know."

"Yes, m'lady."

"There will be trouble soon, Judkins, if things don't mend."

"Yes, m'lady."

"He must marry."

"In course, m'lady."

"But it must be blue blood as well as yellow gold."

"In course, m'lady."

"Do you know of any one suitable?"

"There's only one fam'ly, m'lady, as old as ours."

"The De Montalons?"

"Yes, m'lady."

"But Miss De Montalon has no money."

"No, m'lady."

"Judkins, you're an idiot."

"Yes, m'lady."

"Can't you find a girl with blue blood and money enough?"

"Can't be done, m'lady."

"Ah!" she replied, "we've so little to offer in exchange—now."

"Only a moldy old castle, m'lady. Young ladies nowadays don't care to look at blue blood unless it's got motor cars, and di'monds, and yachts and things to set it off. Even the jackdaws won't stop in the castle now the walls is so shaky. I've had to ketch half-a-dozen, and tie 'em to the battlements with string, just to make the place look more cheerful; and they don't like it."

"Who don't? The birds or the tourists?"

"The birds, m'lady. There's one old jackdaw swears awful. He's got a nest in the tower hard by the 'Fox and 'Ounds,' and he's picked up langwige there as 'ud make your ladyship's hair curl."

"Well, what then? It will save my doing it myself."

"Nat'rally, m'lady, when the jackdaw sees tourists strolling round, he uses his gift, and makes the most of it. I've nearly broke my neck taking up his food to him on the top of the wall. Tourists tell one another about him, and I daren't let him go, or the receipts would fall off. They come miles to hear him swear, m'lady, and look upon it as a treat."

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"What does he say, Judkins?" The old lady sat up with keen interest.

"If he was a 'uming being, m'lady, his fines for bad langwige 'ud eat up all the profits. There's no denyin' he has a gift that way; and, when the old hen brings the young ones over to look at him, and he can't join 'em to go thieving round the village, he just makes the air blue all over the battlements. I had to shorten his string a bit to stop his fighting, and he nearly bit my thumb off."

"I must get up early and have a talk to him myself," said the old lady, with relish. "It's a long time since I've heard what I call really strong language—language that says what it means, and means what it says."

"Yes, m'lady; not since the late earl's time," suggested Judkins. "One could always know what he meant, m'lady."

Lady Fontenoy frowned. "But about Miss De Montalon, Judkins? What's the girl like?"

"Very dark, m'lady—han'some as a picter. She's been away nearly all the time for the last seven years. No money there, m'lady, but blood as good as ours."

"Well, Judkins"—the old lady turned uneasily in her bed—"we must find some one. If I were to die to-morrow, there wouldn't be more than enough to keep your master going for a year."

"Can't you let him work, m'lady? He wants to."

"Work!" The old lady sat bolt upright, with a scream of horror. "A Fontenoy work! Judkins, have you been drinking?"

Judkins furtively moistened dry lips. He liked a glass of good ale, but, in his devotion to the family, often denied himself that pleasure. "No such luck, m'lady. It just makes my tongue go dry to listen to that jackdaw when his fam'ly jeer, and he can't get at 'em. He likes his bread sopped in beer. He'll overlook anything when I give him that."

The old lady reluctantly produced a shilling. "I shall deduct this from your wages, Judkins," she said, magnificently. "In the meantime, slake your thirst, and the—the jackdaw's, too. He mustn't get too thirsty to swear, or people won't come to listen to him."

Judkins hesitated, and shut his lips tight. "If you'd excuse me, m'lady, I ain't so thirsty as I was, and Jacky don't mind his beer being stale. I didn't mean to—to grumble, m'lady."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" The old lady was touched. "Do as I order you, Judkins. The bird must have a little stimulant, just to encourage him, and you must have a little to encourage the bird. Take the shilling, immediately."

Judkins took the shilling. "I can give it back to her to-morrow," he murmured to himself. "Now, Sir Harry'll come to me, and cuss because she won't allow him to work. And she won't let him marry money if there ain't blood be'ind it; and folk with money ain't got no blood, and folk with blood ain't got no money; and I'm as hard up as that old jackdaw, 'cept he don't mind his beer stale, and I does. Sir Harry's got a string round his leg, too; but he can't cut it till the old lady dies. The old earl would ha' pulled up if she'd ha' let him. Not she! She ain't the pulling-up sort. When he wanted to save, 'Remember your blue blood,' says she. 'Poor Harry,' says he. 'Nobody's obliged,' says she, in her orty, forrin way; and he never had no answer to that, though I can't see why. Now, I must take my liv'ry off, and dig worms for that bloomin' jackdaw. Nice way he'll thank me, too, when he gets 'em. Just sits and looks at me, and sneers at my shirt-sleeves, 'cause they ain't as clean as they might be. That's his way when I don't give him any beer. Once or twice, I've nearly 'ad a go at him with a clothes prop. I'd ha' done it, too, if he wasn't such a draw." And Judkins moodily went away, oppressed by the indignity of digging up worms for his ungrateful protégé on the ramparts.

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II

ONE evening, a month after this conversation between Judkins and his mistress, Sir Harry Fontenoy turned out of the Garrick Club, drawing his silk wrapper more closely around his throat. In his hand, he carried a song neatly tied with a piece of string. He did not seem to be particularly anxious for recognition, and, suddenly stopping in a dark corner, took a shapeless bundle from his pocket, and dexterously slipped on a black mustache and wig. When he emerged into the glowing lights of Leicester Square, even the blasé statue of Shakespeare in the middle of it, although staring straight toward him, did not appear to know who he was. A man he had met at the Garrick half an hour ago, brushed hastily past without recognizing him. Thus reassured, Sir Harry continued on his way until he came to a narrow alley leading to the stage entrance of "The Alhambra Music Hall." Even at this entrance, there flamed forth a big poster giving out to the world that the great serio-comic artist, Mr. Harry Vavasour, would that evening sing his new song, "When the World Goes Round, We're Upside Down."

Sir Harry looked at the poster with a grin. "Jove, if the *mater* only found out that I'm earning my living, she'd have a fit. She little knows I've been making a hundred a week for the last five years. And she doesn't know that I know she and Judkins have also been making a pot of money by using that immoral old jackdaw as a decoy-duck to the castle. Well, well, it's a rum world. This is my last night at 'The Halls.' Then, I return to my own halls with Letty and Babs. Where are my lozenges? Ah, that's all right. Now, how does it go? Tra-la-la!

"'When the world goes round we are upside down,
So a very wise man has said;
But the angriest man can't swear or frown
If he stands on the top of his head.'

Rubbish, but the chorus is good. Now to get it off my chest, and back to Letty and Babs. Wouldn't the *mater* be surprised if she were to see Babs! There's more blue blood in the three of us than in the rest of the United Kingdom put together."

He nodded gaily to the sphinx-like, little, old man whose ruffled gray eyebrows gave him the appearance of a benevolent hyena in a pigeonhole.

"Good evenin', Mr. Vavasour," said the little, old man. "How's Mrs. Vavasour doin' at 'The Troc'?"

"Coining money," said Sir Harry. "Babs was asking after you this morning, Binks. She wanted me to bring her down to see you."

Binks poked his head through the little pigeonhole, and there was a blush of pleasure on his weather-beaten countenance. "I've taken the liberty, Mr. Vavasour, sir. A small reminder, sir. A—a gollywog for Miss Babs—a reg'lar black un. I got one of the carpenters to give it an extra coat of paint, and whiten its teeth. Miss Babs can't abear gollywogs with yellow teeth. P'r'aps you wouldn't mind givin' it to Miss Babs, sir, with Binks's love."

Sir Harry took it, heartily. "Look here, Binks, you're an unscrupulous old ruffian! What on earth do you mean by wasting your substance on a wealthy infant like Babs? She's heaps of toys; but she always seems to fancy yours more than any of the others. Mrs. Vavasour shall bring her down to see you in a day or two. Or, better still, run up to us to-morrow morning. I'll let Babs know you're coming."

He went down a narrow stone passage which was faintly illuminated with gas-jets, guarded by wire netting. Along the walls were ranged notices setting forth severe penalties for talking in the wings. A little further on was a recondite request to "Wipe your Trilbies." He wiped his "Trilbies," and entered the little room allotted to him, in order to "make up." He broadened his nose until it had a comic look, darkened his eyebrows, stuck a flaring dab of rouge on each cheek, then sauntered to the wings, and waited for his number to go up.

It was a strange world. The ballet

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was just over, and carpenters scurried about with huge pieces of scenery. They resembled ants dragging preposterous burdens. Fair Amazons, in impossible costumes, gave up their "props" to an old, Fagin-like man who seemed to keep a small shop at the back of the stage. Two gorgeous flunkies with swaggering, quivering calves, attended to put up "Mr. Vavasour's" number. They cast glances of admiration at him, and waited till the great man was ready.

Sir Harry nodded carelessly, as the orchestra struck up the opening bars of, "When the World Goes Round;" then, stuck his hat on the back of his head, and lounged into the glare of the footlights.

As he opened his song, he looked at the sea of faces before him. Though they were too far off for him to distinguish any individual features, they all seemed to be on the broad grin. In private life, Sir Harry was not conscious that he was funny; it was Letty De Montalon who had made the discovery that, with proper training, he could be very funny—in public. He alone had penetrated his old playmate's disguise. She, the only daughter of a house as ancient as his own, had gone on the music-hall stage under an assumed name, to make money. As soon as she had made enough to live on, she intended to go back to Montalon, and resume her ordinary life. Moved by compassion for Sir Harry's impecuniosity, and his ardent desire to do something, she had taken unheard-of pains to train him for the music-hall stage. He had a good voice, some knowledge of music, and any amount of perseverance. In three months, he made his début; in six months, he was getting forty pounds a week; in nine months, he married Letty De Montalon at a registry office; and now there was—Babs.

Babs was already four, although it seemed impossible to believe it. In five years, Sir Harry had made a fortune. Letty had worked for nearly seven; she also had made a fortune. On the whole, they had not spent more than eight hundred a year between them. Any extravagance they committed was on Babs's behalf; but Babs was always worth it, with her big, blue eyes, golden hair, blue blood, and all the winning ways of childhood—ways which had subjugated the worthy Binks, and made him her slave forever.

Sir Harry sang his song to a sea of grinning faces, was encored three times, then leisurely sauntered back to the wings, nodded to Binks on his way out, and stopped short, suddenly. "By the way, Binks, come out of your den a moment. This is my last night here. I want to speak to you."

Binks shuffled out. He was bent and wizened and gray, and seemed lost in the narrow passage. He was very thin, too, with a little dry, habitual cough.

Sir Harry looked at him, compassionately. "We've a surprise in store for you, Binks. How would you like to live in the country?"

Binks shook his head, dubiously. "You wasn't thinkin' of shovin' me into a 'ome for invalids, or any nonsense of that sort, Mr. Vavasour, sir? I'm good for many years yet."

"No; of course not. But a word in your ear, Binks. We're going to give up public life, and thought, perhaps, you'd like to give it up, too, and come with us. My name isn't 'Vavasour' at all; I'm Sir Harry Fontenoy, and Babs is a babe of high degree. I know the secret's safe with you. Give the people here a week's notice, and get your traps together. If you don't believe me, see here. Don't I look like my ancestor in the National Gallery?" He hastily pulled off his wig and mustache, as a tall, fair young man close by opened the door of a brougham, and prepared to get in. Neither of them noticed him. "Do I look like a music-hall fellow?" asked Sir Harry.

The man entering the brougham flashed a startled glance at Sir Harry, then called to his coachman, "The Trocadero, as fast as you can go."

He flung himself back on the cushions with a chuckle. "Wonder what

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Fontenoy's up to. Why, I've been talking to him all the afternoon at 'The Garrick.' Queer fish. Poor as a church rat. No one seems to know where he lives. Can it be possible? Yes, of course. It was 'Vavasour,' the music-hall man, who was talking to Binks, and 'Vavasour' is Fontenoy. That accounts for his always being seen about in quiet little restaurants with Madame Serao. Wonder what he's up to? The last of the Fontenoys earning his living on the music-hall stage! Of course, that's it; and the old lady—the proudest woman in England—doesn't know it. I'll make Madame Serao give him up, or threaten to tell the old lady. He's sure to be coming on to 'The Troc.' I think I see my way now."

He lighted a cigarette, and grinned through the darkness. Although a good-looking young fellow, his grin was not nice. At "The Garrick" that afternoon, Sir Harry had called him "Courthope." In spite of his South-African millions, he was not popular.

Courthope waited at the stage-door of "The Troc," after scribbling a little note and sending it in to Madame Serao. It was an invitation to sup with him and Mr. Vavasour at his rooms. "Wonder what she'll say to that?" he grinned. "If she's in love with Fontenoy, she won't lose the opportunity of meeting him. She's refused all my invitations up to date. It will be a capital dodge to get them together, suddenly show up Fontenoy, and make him go home to his mama like a good little boy. He's sure to be along in a few minutes to fetch her."

Lady Fontenoy, alias Letty De Montalon, alias Madame Serao, was getting into her cloak when Courthope's note reached her. Recognizing the writing, she was about to fling it into the fire. Then, she caught Vavasour's name, and smiled. "What does Harry mean by accepting this Mr. Courthope's invitation?" she mused. "He knows that the man is always pestering me with his attentions. Still, if I refuse, I shall have to go home, and sup alone. Of course, I shall wait here until Harry appears. It was silly of him to accept. He will not enjoy seeing another man making love to me."

She drew Sir Harry's miniature from her heart, looked into his great, honest eyes, and smiled. "To think I'm as much in love with him as the first day we met! How tired I am of this life, although it is my last night of it! Bohemia has dealt very generously with us; but we have had enough of it. I want to help Harry rebuild Fontenoy, bring up Babs in her proper sphere, and forget—bohemia. Once we give up 'The Halls,' there must be no more bohemia. Yes, I think we have both had enough of 'The Halls,' and more than enough of Mr. Courthope. Now for him. I wish Harry had not accepted such an invitation from a man whom I cordially dislike."

She hastily scribbled a line:

"Let me know when Mr. Vavasour arrives, and I will join you."

"Take that down to Mr. Courthope," she said to her "dresser."

The "dresser" reached the stage-door just as Sir Harry arrived.

Courthope tore open the note. "Mr. Vavasour, I think?" he said, turning to Sir Harry.

With an inaudible chuckle, Sir Harry bowed. Courthope had been yarning to him about lions all the afternoon.

"Will you sup with me to-night?" asked Courthope. "I have asked Madame Serao to join us."

"Madame Serao!"

"Yes, you know her, of course? That was why I thought of asking you."

"And she consents?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"She is not in the habit—" Sir Harry began, hastily. Then, he checked himself as Courthope grinned with satisfaction.

"I know, but here is her note," Courthope said.

Sir Harry's countenance cleared. He saw that Courthope had noticed his intimacy with "Madame Serao," and had taken advantage of it. But what was his object? Was he in love

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with Letty? Never mind, he would soon find out. If Courthope wished to make him jealous, he was a fool. Letty would explain, later.

Letty came down, dark-eyed, radiant, the loveliest woman in London. She had the faculty of putting off "The Music Hall" directly she escaped from it, and was simply the great lady. Courthope, as she bowed to him somewhat distantly, was full of delight at the success of his stratagem. "Can we all squeeze into my coupé?" she said, doubtfully. "Good evening, Mr. Vavasour."

Sir Harry bowed, formally. "Wish he wouldn't treat her as if she were in his own set," murmured Courthope. "You can't be familiar with a woman who gives herself such airs. She apes the grand manner perfectly. Hadn't we better all get into my brougham?" he suggested.

"Thanks," said "Madame Serao." She told her coachman to follow Mr. Courthope's carriage, and wait. Then, she got in, and motioned to Courthope to sit beside her. "It will serve Harry right," she thought, "for accepting an invitation of this kind without consulting me. The man has pestered me with his abominable attentions for the last three months. It is time that he discontinued them for good and all."

Sir Harry was unruffled. "It's a queer business, but she will tell me all about it," he mused, "when we get home. Courthope thinks we're only friends. The beggar's so cocky at getting her to sup with us, that I'm not going to undeceive him just yet. If he isn't careful, he may wish he hadn't thought of this ingenious little dodge. It may not work out in quite the way he expects."

Courthope's rooms were perhaps a trifle too florid to please a puritanic taste. He himself seemed to be conscious of this, and accounted for it by his life in South Africa. "One loses touch there," he said, "with good taste. It takes a man a year or two to get into the correct attitude." Letty thought it would take Courthope more than a year or two, although he made an admirable host. The supper was served to perfection by his man, who waited deft-handed, shod with the slippers of silence. After bringing coffee and liqueurs and cigars, the man withdrew, and there ensued a momentary pause.

"You smoke, Madame Serao?" asked Courthope, pushing a box of perfumed cigarettes toward her.

It seemed to Letty a punishment for being in bohemia, to assume that she smoked. Besides, it implied so many other things.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid. All the women in good society do," said Courthope, mistaking her attitude, and anxious to show his knowledge of "good society."

"Thank you," replied Letty, coldly; "I fear that in this respect, at least, I cannot aspire to imitate good society. It is so—so far above me."

Courthope looked significantly at Sir Harry. "Indeed! indeed! I should have thought"—he passed the liqueurs to Sir Harry as he spoke—"from your manner that you were in constant touch with it."

Letty rose, as if tired. She had not come there to discuss her manner with Courthope. "Perhaps you will see me to my carriage, Mr. Vavasour! It is late, and I am tired. Good night, Mr. Courthope. At some future time, I shall hope to have the pleasure of returning your hospitality."

Courthope got up, and lounged insolently toward the fireplace. "Ah, yes, thanks. But, before you go, there is one little thing I wanted to say."

Sir Harry also rose. "I don't think I would say it in that way, if I were you," he suggested, with a touch of anger in his voice.

"Why not—Fontenoy?" asked Courthope, quietly, and awaited the effect of his carefully thrown bomb. Neither "Madame Serao" nor "Vavasour" seemed surprised.

"You see, it's no good." Courthope turned with a grin to Letty. "I spotted him this evening, and I knew you would not accept my invitation without him. Then, he came up just at the right moment, and I bagged you both. Good

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night, Fontenoy. Sorry to turn you out, but you'd better go. I want to talk over this little matter with Madame Serao—alone!"

There was a dangerous glint in Sir Harry's blue eyes, as he moved nearer to the fireplace.

Courthope rang the bell. "Order my carriage for Sir Harry Fontenoy," he said to the servant.

Sir Harry's fist shot out; Courthope went down like a bullock. The impassive valet waited at the door, as Courthope struggled up on one elbow.

"I give you one more chance," hissed Courthope. "Leave the house at once, or to-morrow I go down to Fontenoy, and call on your mother, you—you pauper, music-hall aristocrat."

"Thanks," said Sir Harry. "I'd put a bit of raw beefsteak on that eye if I were you, Courthope. You'll want it—badly." He turned to Letty, and offered her his arm.

"You'll not let him take you away till you've heard what I have to say," sneered Courthope. "He can't hope to marry you."

"That is a matter which scarcely needs discussion," said Letty, haughtily. "Come, Harry."

"True enough," said Sir Harry. "Fact is, Courthope, you'll be delighted to hear that we are already married." He turned to the valet. "Lady Fontenoy's carriage. If you're not satisfied, Courthope, get up, and I'll knock you down again. Perhaps, on the whole, you'd better stay where you are, and take my tip about the beefsteak."

When they reached the carriage, Letty nestled closely up to him. "He will go down to Fontenoy first thing in the morning," she said, apprehensively. "He can easily get a chemist to paint his eye for him."

"Never mind if he does, I don't think any chemist's painting can come up to mine. We'll take a little later train," said Sir Harry. "I should like to see him interviewing the *mater*. He'll keep her awake for a bit."

As the carriage rolled away, Courthope got up from the rug, and looked at his disfigured optic in the glass. "Get me a piece of raw beefsteak, and don't stand staring there, you fool," he said to the returning valet. "Where's the railway guide?"

The unmoved valet brought him a small piece of beefsteak on a large plate, and a railway guide.

"Of course, they're not married," muttered Courthope, hastily turning over the leaves; "that's all brag. I'll go down by the nine-o'clock train to Fontenoy, and tell the old lady everything. Then, her precious bully of a son will have to return to her. I fancy Madame Serao will soon be sick of him."

The valet silently approached the table. He coughed, deprecatingly.

"What do you want?" asked Courthope.

"I beg to resign, sir."

"Resign! Stuff! Nonsense! What for?"

"I have my feelings, sir," declared the valet. "I was once with a dook; I owe it to myself and the haristocracy to leave."

"Go to the devil!" growled Courthope.

"After you, sir," said the valet, with a polite bow.

III

JUDKINS regarded Courthope's card with suspicion. "Her ladyship's in bed," he remarked, with an air of finality. "We don't get up till eleven."

"'We don't get up till eleven'! Why, you look as if you never went to bed at all," retorted Courthope.

"I ain't up officially till my liv'ry's on, and I don't put on my liv'ry till eleven," said Judkins, surlily. "You can't see the ruins till eleven."

"Ruins! I want to see her ladyship." Courthope seemed to think it was the same thing.

"If you'll just stroll round till I've got into my liv'ry," said Judkins, "I'll take your card up. Officially, I ain't here at all; but you make it worth my while, and I'll just risk it."

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Courthope deftly insinuated a sovereign into Judkins's supple palm. "All right. I didn't know you'd a fixed hour for exhibiting the—the curiosities of the place, or I'd have come later. But my business is urgent. I'll stroll round the ramparts while you're gone. The flyman was telling me about a curious bird you have here."

Judkins became more respectful. "*He* ain't curious; it's his langwige," he said, gradually unbending to the gracious influence of so munificent a tip. "Here's my key, sir. You'll find the tooth-extractor in the shed."

"Tooth-extractor!"

"Yes, sir, tooth-extractor. Our fam'ly used it in the old days when people came bothering us. Sometimes—" he glanced significantly at his premature visitor—"sometimes I wish we were back in the good old times."

"Ah, yes! dare say you do. These are quite good enough for me." Courthope took the keys, and lighted a cigar. "Now for the jackdaw. Come and fetch me when you're officially ready."

He strolled around the ruins, and amused himself, when he came out on the ramparts, by flinging pebbles at the jackdaw. At first, that venerable bird only winked, then suddenly opened his beak, and let fly a volley of rustic profanity which astounded even so hardened a being as Courthope.

Courthope climbed up the ramparts, and discovered that the vituperative bird was tied to a loose brick by a string. "For two pins," he said, vindictively, "I'd wring your neck."

The jackdaw again repeated his impressions concerning Courthope. They were wholly unfavorable.

Stung by these unprovoked insults, Courthope made a sudden spring, caught his foot in a crevice, and tried to seize the wily bird.

The jackdaw made one thrust with a bill which patient rubbing on the brick had rendered razor-like in its sharpness. Courthope missed his aim and footing, and bumped down to the foot of the ramparts, severely damaging his clothes in the process. His anger was not appeased to hear Judkins chuckling behind him.

"I keeps the stones loose in case some one tries to steal him," Judkins explained. "'Tain't the first time he's held the fort; and 'twon't be the last, neither."

He dexterously dusted Courthope, and set him on his feet again. "If it's pianos or sewing-machines or fam'ly Bibles to sell, her ladyship won't see you," he explained. "If it's really about Sir Harry, you're to come along o' me."

"Confound it!" Courthope wrathfully shouted. "Do I look like a man who sells pianos and sewing-machines? This is the last place in the world I'd think of bringing a Bible to."

"You did look like it—afore I brushed you," retorted Judkins. "You're sure this sov'rin's a good un?" He suspiciously tested the coin with his teeth. "It don't seem 'ard enough."

"Why, it's as hard as your skull," Courthope declared, his good-humor suddenly returning.

"Garne whoam to mother," jeered the jackdaw, hopping upon his brick; then, collecting himself for a final and cumulative effort, he said, in the frankest, most unbowdlerized terms, what he thought of Courthope.

"Who taught him all that?" asked Courthope, admiringly. "Your mistress?"

Judkins, disdaining any reply to this infamous insinuation, led the way in silence.

For once, Lady Fontenoy had got up, and was already attired in the black silk. She received Courthope in semi-state. "You needn't go, Judkins," she said, after one comprehensive glance at Courthope. "The—the gentleman will not stay long."

Courthope felt that this was not a very promising beginning.

"Now, sir"—the old lady turned to him, majestically—"be kind enough to explain the object of this intrusion. I

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hear that your visit concerns my son. Does he owe you any money?"

"Oh, no," said Courthope, indifferently. "I have plenty of money. Fine old place you have here; a little moldy and tarnished, perhaps, but there's an air about it—blue blood and all that sort of thing, don't you know."

"I don't know," declared the old lady; "and, to judge from your manner, I shouldn't think you knew, either. To say the least of it, it is unfortunate. Poor but worthy parents, I presume?"

Courthope flushed, angrily. He allowed his parents five pounds a month on condition that they stayed in a remote part of South Africa, and never claimed him for their own. "I didn't come here to discuss my parents," he said. "All the world has heard of your devotion to your unworthy son. I want to talk to you about him."

"Unworthy! Your family is recent, I presume?"

"Yes—very."

"I knew it. Of course, I cannot listen to you. The very idea is preposterous."

"Eh? What?" exclaimed the amazed Courthope. "Can't listen to me, when I've come all this way to tell you something important?"

The old lady rose in indignant majesty. "No, sir, of course I cannot listen to you. A Fontenoy can only be criticized by a Fontenoy—not by a —a mushroom."

In the face of this amazing arrogance—this muddle-headed medievalism—Courthope made an effort to recover his self-possession. "You surprise me almost as much as your wonderful bird," he said, smilingly. "I came here to do you a good turn, Lady Fontenoy."

"You! Thank you, but I am not in the habit of receiving 'good turns' from strangers. I refer you to——"

"Sir Harry?" sneered Courthope.

"No, sir; the jackdaw on the ramparts. I know enough of him to be aware that he can express my feelings with regard to you in language which my rank, unhappily, precludes me from using. Judkins, the door."

Courthope took up his hat. "So sorry your rank prevents you from listening to me," he remarked, nonchalantly. "I came down to warn you that your son is misconducting himself in London."

"Sir," said the old lady, with thrilling hauteur, "even your parvenu ignorance should not have blinded you to the fact that a Fontenoy is a law unto himself, and can only be criticized by his peers."

"Well, you see, unfortunately, I'm not a peer." Courthope attempted a sneer, which failed, signally.

"The misfortune would be that of your fellow-peers. Door, Judkins!"

"One moment, Lady Fontenoy. Your son has been making money on the music-hall stage. A Fontenoy exhibiting himself as a hired buffoon on the music-hall stage! Think of the disgrace!"

"Disgrace!" The old lady thrust her head forward with a movement strongly resembling the jackdaw's. "Disgrace! When a Fontenoy takes to the stage, sir, I would have you know that he sets the fashion. There is no question of disgrace."

"But there's a—a lady in the case." Courthope paused to allow his infamous meaning to sink into the old lady's mind.

"Well, sir?"

"Oh, that's all. I see you're not surprised. He *is* very blue-blooded, after all, isn't he?"

"Where did you say you come from?" asked Lady Fontenoy, with unexpected amiability.

"South Africa."

"Ah, I thought so—from your manner—or the want of it. Were you resident in Europe you would, of necessity, be aware that in a semi-royal house like ours, we have certain traditions which we live up to."

"I wouldn't say *up*," replied Courthope.

"That's your bourgeois view of things. Judkins, the door!"

"One moment." Courthope bowed, deprecatingly. "He says he's married to her—a music-hall singer! Married!"

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"Well?"

"For an old family like yours to mix its blue blood with the muddy tide of a daughter of the people must be somewhat of a shock."

"Must it! You are evidently unaware that we ennoble those with whom we ally ourselves. Did he *say* he was married to her?"

"He did; and ordered 'Lady Fontenoy's carriage.' They supped with me last night."

"Ah, yes; we have the royal manner, too. It isn't the first time a Fontenoy has lied to save a woman's honor," declared the old lady. She came down from her chair, which was on a sort of dais, and approached Courthope, scrutinizingly. "This was at a supper, you say?"

"Yes—last night."

The old lady, who had the eye, as well as the beak, of an eagle, looked him squarely in the face. "Did anything happen to you at the supper?"

"Any—thing!" stammered Courthope.

"Yes; your eyes—forgive me for being personal"—her manner was sweetly solicitous—"don't quite match."

"Oh, it's a way they have in South Africa—the—the climate," Courthope hastily explained.

"Indeed! It seems to me more recent. I should have thought, if you had asked my opinion, that their sudden disparity in size began last night."

"But I didn't——"

"No, I know you didn't. Perhaps you would like to see this telegram?" The old lady thrust it suddenly under the bewildered Courthope's nose. "Read it out. There! Take it! Read it out, man, if you know how to read."

Courthope took it.

"'Amusing scoundrel named Courthope coming to call on you. Don't believe him. *Noblesse oblige*. Shall be with you in an hour.

"'HARRY.'"

"You understand? Perhaps you do not care to meet my son? He might find it incumbent to do away with your inequality of vision. He has been well trained."

"Looks as if he were going to brazen it out. Believe me, Lady Fontenoy, I don't know which has charmed me more—the pleasure of meeting you or the making the acquaintance of your invaluable bird. *Au revoir*."

"I trust not."

Courthope bowed low. "Madame, did my blood match yours, I should aspire to the privilege of meeting you as an equal."

"Sir," bowed the old lady, "as it is impossible even to imagine so remote a contingency, I am afraid that you must content yourself with the society of the jackdaw."

"Thanks, no," said Courthope, languidly. "Like your own, his retorts are too pointed."

"I shall not detain you, lest they should become sharper still. Door, Judkins."

Judkins moved to the door. As he did so, there was a sound of footsteps along the old stone passage. "Where's gwan'ma?" asked a childish treble.

"Here," said Sir Harry. "You go first, Babs, and kiss her hand. Don't be frightened."

"Fwitened!" The little maid's patrician head went up with the grace of a thoroughbred's. "Fwitened, daddy!"

She walked into the room, her large, fearless, innocent eyes searching for Lady Fontenoy. Then, she approached the amazed old lady. "Gwan'ma, I have come to kiss your hand."

The old lady's eyes nearly started from their sockets. "'Gran'ma!' Who are you, child? Quick! Who are you?"

The little maid drew herself up still more proudly, as a sunbeam danced through the dusty window, and played upon her golden head. "I am Lady Bawbawa de Montalon Fontenoy, gwan'ma," she said, gravely. "I have come to kiss your hand."

The old lady bent down, extended her hand, caught the dainty little figure in her arms, and snatched it to her starved old heart.

"Babs, present your mother to the

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Dowager Lady Fontenoy," said Sir Harry, gravely.

Courthope hesitated a moment. All that was best in him came to the front, and struggled for utterance. "Fontenoy, I beg you and your wife to accept my sincerest apologies. I—I am ashamed."

As he stumbled out of the room, the old lady, all her pride of race forgotten, still caressed the child. Then, she moved swiftly to the door.

"Not a word for us, mother? Where are you going?" asked Sir Harry.

The old lady nearly stumbled in her haste. "Yes, yes, it's all right, Harry. It's all right. I'll talk to your wife, presently. I'm going to show the child to the jackdaw."

Babs struggled down to the floor. "But, gwan'ma, there's Binks."

"Binks!" said the old lady, halting on the threshold. "Binks! What is a Binks?"

"Binks," declared the golden-haired mite, taking the grotesque, shambling old door-keeper by the hand, "Binks is my oldest fwend! Binks, this is gwan'ma—gwan'ma, this is Binks."

"Proud to meet your ladyship," said Binks, extending a horny paw.

Lady Fontenoy shook it, graciously. "I am charmed to know a friend of my granddaughter's," she said, with regal condescension.

"Yes, gwan'ma," piped Babs; "I knew you and Binkie would love each other!"

UNDERSONGS

IN Summer didst thou never dream alone
Beside some woodland stream that crept o'er stone
And shoal and root in tinkling waterfalls,
While from a meadow came the far-off calls
Of piping birds across the wind-blown flowers,
And deep-toned bees droned down the lazy hours?

There, buried 'neath the daisies' waving heads,
Deep in the clover's spangled whites and reds,
Didst thou ne'er read some poet's golden page,
Mellow and pensive with the dust of age,
Till woodland bird and bee and tinkling brook
Blent with the music of the poet's book?

And hast thou turned to that same page again,
When Earth had lost the old, familiar strain
Of mingling stream and noonday bee and bird,
And in regretful undersongs still heard
The droning wings and mellow-fluted notes
In lingering echoes from those silent throats?
And hast thou ne'er still heard the murmuring stream
Creep thro' the music of the poet's dream?

ARTHUR STRINGER.

ELSIE—I don't believe in falling in love.
HELEN—Who is the millionaire?

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AT THE YEAR'S END

By Martha Fishel

FELIX DARRELL, patron of the arts, rich and sufficiently young, looked about the studio of his bachelor suite, his eyes veiled in reverie.

"That bit of tapestry is hung divinely—her suggestion. These rooms prove her taste to be perfect. Who but she would have placed this brass jug so that it catches the light, making it the same glowing yellow as the jonquils filling it? Who, indeed, but Kate, would have dared put the dancing nymph cheek by jowl with that dreaming monk? By Jove, his expression under his cowl seems already softened at the nearness of her inviting eyes!"

He laughed softly at the idea.

"Dear Kate!—a mixture of Puritan and pagan. The pagan within you was dominant the day you lifted the monk, your eyes full of daring; but to-night the Puritan is at hand, and, though you love me, you have said you will marry Archer."

No shadow of disappointment or chagrin was in his face. He was rather amused than otherwise, as he puffed rings of smoke into the air.

"It was like her spirit and daring to ask me to dine to-night, giving no hint of the *coup* in store, and without an instant's warning, announce her coming marriage with Archer—Archer, of all men, her *bon camarade*, her silent adorer whom she has not seen for three years, since he went to build a railroad, or appraise a mine, in Mexico. It was like her, but rather stupefying, as our last sitting in this very room, with her Aunt Eustace dozing in the library, was one to warm my heart while it beats."

The amused mood passed. He rose, and flung his cigar angrily into the glowing heart of the fire, where it sent up a shower of sparks.

"And I thought she was almost molded to my views! I believed I had influenced her into snapping her fingers at the man-made marriage laws, for gods to break—shackles well enough for the herd, as some form of religion is their necessity; but for ourselves I pleaded the union whose evasive charm lay in its absolute freedom."

He pushed back the thick hair, now just touched with gray, from his moist temples. "I've failed," he said, aloud, in bitter chagrin.

He knew his influence over her sensuous nature had been as heady and illusory as the first days of early Spring, when the earth trembles and quickens with the knowledge of young life. But he had hoped it had sunk deeper, to the roots and fibers of her being. And she was going to marry Archer! This was her answer to him.

He realized now what the appeal in her eyes had meant, at their last meeting—her silence, as he kissed her into a seeming submission. She feared herself—feared the feeling that threatened domination, feared the moment of fulfilment that seemed almost upon her. In that fear, a resolve was born. She tore his influence from her as an unclean garment. And so—she was going to marry Archer.

"She shall not marry him! I can't lose her. She'll marry *me*. Mrs.

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Grundy has me on her bodkin. On her head be it, if the steel chafes my flesh. At any rate, Kate knows my views, and, if I fall short of the stereotyped measure, she must meet it without flinching."

He turned from the fire, with the air of a student whose solution of a puzzling problem is within his grasp, and, taking up a pen, wrote these lines:

There were two roads to love. The primrose path was my choosing, but your eyes are turned to the stony, up-hill way. So be it. We'll tread it together. To-morrow, I shall go and claim you.

When the note was taken to the post by his man, Darrell once more settled himself deeply in his chair, smoking and thinking far into the night, an inscrutable smile upon his lips.

He turned into West Eleventh street the next afternoon, meeting Kate's maid, who carried an armful of letters.

"Miss Hale is at home, Margaret?"

"Miss Hale was married at noon today, sir, quite privately. I am mailing the announcement cards. She sails to-night for England."

II

THREE weeks later, the sun was striving to penetrate the gray mist that lay over London, and was peering, with stealthy eyes, into a hansom rolling along Piccadilly.

Under cover of the hansom's apron, Laurence Archer held his wife's hand, from which he had slipped the glove. Kate's eyes were ruminative.

"What are you thinking of?"

"That I'm a wonderful woman to feel as tolerant to you as I do this morning, after your confession of last night. Are you glad or sorry, Larry, that you didn't marry an ingénue, whose life had been bounded by church sociables? But don't speak. The curtain's fallen, my dear boy, on your checkered past, as the novelists say; so, no more of it. But I'm very glad we had our talk."

"And why? Tell me, Kate, why you questioned me so unmercifully about—well, about those days of folly—before I loved you?"

"Perhaps, I wanted to have a pharisaical pleasure in the contrast between us; or, perhaps, I wanted to keep it bottled as a balm to soothe me in thinking of my own peccadillos; who knows?"

They looked at each other, his eyes vaguely troubled, hers with two excited points of light in their depths; then, they both laughed.

"Ah, no, Kate! not the last, I'm sure. Thank God, women like you are spared the experiences of the young male before he is dubbed a man among his fellows."

"Oh, you men!" said Kate, the words coming quickly. "You soothe yourselves, as an excuse for your license, with a worn-out sophistry, but while you are in the thrall of the flesh, what of the woman you pursue? Is she passive always?"

"A man worships, and keeps as a marvelous memory, the woman who cannot be tempted. Good women——"

"Oh, no, of course, good women are never tempted! I forgot." Her tone was almost harsh, her breath uneven, as she spoke. "But why go on? London is before us. To talk of serious things on a morning like this is much the same as playing Chopin's Funeral March at a wedding. Just look at those lions, Larry, crouching about Nelson's pillar! They thrill me."

But he tightened his clasp of her hand, and looked at her as if he would read the expression of her heart rather than of her eyes.

"Do you love me, Kate? It was all so sudden, I can't believe you are my wife. Did you marry me because you loved me? But never mind—it is enough that you took me. The rest will come."

Her answer was to turn to him with glistening eyes, her lips slightly trembling.

"Why didn't you come a year sooner? Why didn't you come to me then?"

Before his surprised question had

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passed from eyes to lips, her mood had changed.

"It's as well, as it is. Had you asked me then—who can tell?"

"You were in a strange mood, Kate, that night you gave the dinner, when we, quite incidentally, announced our coming marriage."

"Wasn't it funny?" she laughed. "Five minutes before you told the happy fact, you didn't know it yourself. Do you remember my aunt's dazed expression?"

Her lids closed. The memory of Felix Darrell's stunned eyes, as they looked then, was like a finger pressing on her heart.

"Darrell is the one I recall that night," said her husband. "That man of many affairs and few heart-throbs was completely feezed. I don't like him; I never did. He isn't wholesome. I was always sorry for your friendship; he is so utterly selfish and artificial. I recall a conversation of his at the club one day, which gave me his measure. He said, 'Love, as I read it, cannot exist in a prosaic atmosphere. The Venus de Milo, with a sore throat, would be, to me, a thing to fly from.'"

"Don't bring in Felix Darrell's name! He has no part in a London Spring morning. The emotions this marital condition rouses are too primary for a man of his leanings. Stop the hansom, Larry, and buy me a bunch of the violets that poor little waif is selling."

As she sank back, her face pressed to the flowers, London faded, and her mind brooded on each day of the previous months, with the fascination which will prompt one to peer over the precipice narrowly escaped.

"In three weeks more," said Archer, "we must be back in New York. Let us revel in this breathing time, my darling; let us forget that directors of mines and railroads exist."

At mention of their return, Kate shivered and said nothing.

III

Darrell was amused as he read the following paragraph in his paper one May morning:

Mrs. Laurence Archer was at home to her friends yesterday. After her wedding journey in Europe, she looked radiant. Among those who wished her happiness were—etc., etc., etc.

The reading infinitely entertained him. More than that, he was flattered, for no bidding had come to him.

"She fears me. No sign—no card. I am the peri debarred from that matrimonial paradise. But, ye gods! how she must fear herself!"

He closed his eyes in thought. She was with him again in spirit. Again, he felt her lips, her breath. He opened his eyes. These rooms, about which she had once moved so familiarly, sometimes chaperoned, sometimes daringly alone, as the moth hovers near the flame—were they never to know her again?

He looked with meditative scrutiny from one object to another; then, as his eyes fell on the dancing nymph, still wooing the monk, a flash lightened his eyes, and a sure, slow smile rested there.

"Yes, she will come," his soul declared. "Despite her shield in the shape of a conventional, prosperous civil engineer, whose name she bears, I shall one day hold her in my arms again—here. She will listen then, without doubt troubling her eyes. She will come as a passionate queen might, not as a wondering novice at the door of life. The strain in her which made her set that nymph there will send her to me, when she wearies of pulseless domesticity. She didn't love Archer; she did love me. I can wait."

IV

The months crawled by and found Darrell still in a questioning mood regarding Mrs. Archer. He had been able to see her only in the most conventional fashion, and with amused eyes watched the clever manœuvering she planned and successfully carried out to avoid a tête-à-tête. He received no card; therefore, he could not venture to call.

"She treats me as if I were a typhoid germ. But, evidently, the antiseptic

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qualities of connubial bliss have not been able to rob me of my terrors," he had at first thought, cynically satisfied.

But, when the days deepened into months, and there was no sign, he suffered an angry chagrin that forced him to resort to excesses in order to forget.

Finally, he went abroad, but at the end of three months returned, his fancy still in the chains he had tried to break.

Kate had been married a year, when Darrell became again a part of the New York life; yet a chance glimpse of her odd beauty in a hansom flashing past had power to make his pulses quicken.

"Won't she make a sign? Was I wrong? She's not a woman to thrive by propinquity alone. Unless she began with love, she's the type that could grow to hate the other in the eternal duet; and she certainly didn't love Archer."

These thoughts kept pace with the movements of his brush, as he made the most of a late afternoon in early April, to work on a painting begun almost a year before.

The studio was silent, save for the mellow tick of a big clock in the shadow, and the sputtering of an open fire which sent a golden flood over the beautiful room, and struck bronze and orange lights from the old furniture and worn silver.

The sound of the door-knocker made him look up with irritation. He wanted to be alone, and now, doubtless, some club friend was coming to invite himself comfortably to dinner.

"Come," he growled.

The door opened, and a woman stood upon the threshold—a woman all in white, with white flowers in her hair, wreathing her pale face, from which her eyes glowed startlingly intent and very bright.

"Kate!"

His brush fell to the floor, but, for a time, he could not move.

The woman entered, and softly, carefully, closed the door.

"I am not dead, and this is not my wraith," said the woman, with a defiant little laugh; and she came nearer, pausing half-way down the room, where twilight and firelight made a mysterious frame for her.

"Kate!" he said, again; and now nothing but joy rang in the syllable, as he held out both hands.

She made no responsive movement, but regarded him with a long, slow, wondering gaze that baffled him.

"Won't you ask me to sit down?" And, as he listened to her voice again in that room, his dream of months became a reality.

He drew a big chair of black oak, upholstered in worn Utrecht velvet, close to the fire.

"The saint's chair," said Kate. "Do you remember how you used to say you would one day paint me in this chair, with a nice little halo about my head? I'm afraid my coming here today seems to crush even my remote eligibility to a saintship, doesn't it?" And she sank down, the folds of her white, furry cloak falling in gracious waves about her.

Felix leaned on the mantel, and looked at her. Her eyes, the tantalizing lift of her smiling mouth, her serious brow, puzzled him. But he felt she had at last slipped the leash, that she had yielded; and yet, something evasive in her presence held him at arm's length. It must be that she was torturing him, only to be gracious in the end. This was a game sweet to women, and played so perfectly.

Despite her attempt to tear clefts in the bulwarks of his selfish philosophy, she had at last come back to him instinctively, irresistibly, as he had known she would. He had triumphed; she had failed.

But in her attitude there was nothing of the captured; there was rather, he thought, the proud capitulation of one who has fought a fair fight, and who feels, even in defeat, the victor.

She looked about the place, her eyes lingering on the monk and nymph. Clasping her hands about her knees, she leaned nearer.

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"Everything is the same here," she murmured. "Nothing is changed but ourselves."

She bridged the past twelve months in those words. She thus subtly invited him to say all the reckless, passionate words knocking at the door of his lips.

"Speak for yourself," he said, unevenly.

She purposely misunderstood him, and, still studying him, moved a little in the chair, her white cheeks stained by an excited glow.

"You want an explanation of my coming? Well, that is easily given. Say that a whim drove me here, if you like. I come to this building three times a week—to Olivia Derber, on the floor below. She is doing a miniature of me. I've just had a sitting in these white clothes. Then, too, if you wish to study cause and effect, Larry left to-day for Chicago on business. Now, then—Larry, Chicago, business"—she ticked them off on her fingers—"make a practical trio, while a studio building, myself in this angelic gown, and you close by with your unconquerable, defiant theories, your gray hair, disappointed eyes, old china and firelight, go to make up a tangle of poetry too seductive to be resisted. Do you see?"

"You wanted to come—that's enough for me," he said, grimly. "A whole year, I have been waiting for this."

The dusk was thick now, and her eyes more bright than before, as she gently put aside his hand which sought hers on the arm of the chair.

"Have you?"

"Yes, Kate. I was sure you would come."

"Were you?"

"As sure as that I loved you."

"You do love me, then?"

He knelt on the low foot-stool beside her, and seized her hand in a savage way. Its coldness was startling. So was her sudden movement as she stepped past him to the mantel, and looked down at him as he leaned against the saint's chair.

"Don't come any nearer," she said, breathlessly; "but tell me—do you love me? Just tell me."

She bent her head, and there was a rigid quiet in the listening face. The firelight leaped between them; the clock ticked in the silence.

Then, he poured out his heart to her. What he said he hardly knew; but it was a wild avowal of love, passion, need—of past wretchedness and present delight in her presence. He launched forth his old, pagan denunciations; he declared Impulse the only fitting comrade for Love; he spoke of her marriage as a chain of sand, to be blown away by the simoon of a resistless passion.

At last, he paused, his brain dazed by his own onrushing eloquence, which her listening, but aloof, attitude had brought forth.

"And, when I have given up all for you," came from the shadows, "we are to be outcasts together, counting the world well lost? Where are we to go—to Tangier? When a man runs off with another man's wife, they generally settle there, don't they? It's sunny, lax, and a long way from all newspapers."

The bitterness of her voice made him wince. She was battling with herself; she was suffering.

"Dear Kate," he said, standing before her; "don't be unhappy. After all, there's another way, you know."

"Yes?" the question was encouraging.

"Why give up anything? Say that conventionality is ugly; it is, nevertheless, a giant, and we need not affront it. Wouldn't a little discretion be better than—Tangier?"

Her laugh rang out so naturally, so sincerely, that he winced. He dimly saw her make a backward movement, and press the electric button. In a second they were bathed in a white, blinding light. It showed his face pallid and wondering. It showed her pale, too, but smiling with a mixture of open amusement and mockery.

"I felt it! So—this was what it all meant? All your vaunted theories conclude that way, do they? Just

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the usual, banal game of petty deceit!"

She was drawing on her long gloves. Darrell seemed to feel the sea beneath him. The dazed speculation of his eyes must be answered.

"Now, although my brougham is waiting, and I am due at a dinner," she said, amiably, "I'll tell you why I came to-day. I didn't love my husband when I married him—that you know. When I felt myself growing to love him, I felt that, if I had never listened to you, I should have loved him. The happiest marriage, from the very meaning of life, must have something of sameness in its peaceful rhythm. I began to fret against it—to wonder if this sweet tranquillity were not stupid, compared with the raptures of uncertainty, of the love unbound of which you used to talk. In fact, my memory was poisoned by you. I could not see the charm of the pure lyric of my life. My imagination was haunted by your words, as by some sensuous Eastern music. Did I love you, I asked myself, or was your power over me born of a woman's perversity, the charm of something fantastic, feared and not understood?"

She paused. His dull eyes shot forth an angry gleam, as her glance swept leisurely over him.

"So, I came to hear you out—to know myself. No half-measures! I came into the lion's mouth, my dear Felix, and I find the lion—toothless."

She drew her cloak about her.

"How glad I am! How free I am of you, forever! How I love Larry this very moment! As a man with his hand honestly against the granite laws that confine human passion, you were dangerous, but I respected your fearlessness. As the smug sinner counseling discretion, you are tiresome."

She opened the door. He shuddered. It was the most mortifying moment of his life.

"Good-bye," she laughed. "Be a bold sinner, or a good man."

The door closed softly behind her.

FAIR AND DEAR

"HOW fair thou art! how fair!" So the young lover
Praises each grace,
Each strange, new charm his joyous eyes discover
In her sweet form and face.

But happier far is he, the gray old lover
Of many a year,
Who still can say, when life's best joy is over,
"How dear thou art! how dear!"

MADELINE BRIDGES.

EVEN the sea has its ups and downs.

"WHAT can I take to cure my kleptomania?"
"Don't take anything; then you'll soon be cured."

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THE PLAINT OF A POETESS

By Ethel M. Kelley

I WROTE a poem of a heart,
That yearned all unrequited;
I polished it with all my art,
Reviewed it, quite delighted!
But, "Ah!" my friends bewailed apart,
"Poor child, her life is blighted!"

I wrote some verses to a ghost;
And then, in manner rougher,
I wrote a ballad to a most
Disreputable duffer!
And still my friends, a mournful host:
"Poor thing, how she must suffer!"

And once I wrote a sweetheart song
(Although I never had one),
Alliterative it was, and long,
A bitter and a bad one!
"Who was the man?" the chorus strong.
"He must have been a sad one!"

A sonnet on betrothal made
I then, an effort bolder;
In exigence of metre, laid
"My head upon his shoulder."
"A fickle creature, I'm afraid.
How quickly she consoled her!"

A problem takes away my breath,
And does not cease to flurry me
Till, like my Lady of Macbeth,
I wring my hands, and worry me.
If I should write an ode to Death,
Would they prepare to bury me?

If anybody doesn't know,
Then won't somebody tell 'em,
That all these narratives of woe
We print and bind in vellum,
Are never just exactly so—
Or else we shouldn't sell 'em!

HE—I am crazy to kiss you!
SHE—When I am crazy I'll let you.

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A WOODLAND AWAKENING

A WHISPER trembles down the valley,
A stir awakes the drowsy glen
To council chat and mating rally
Of bobolink and thrush and wren.

The yellow-hammer raps his gavel
Upon the hollow rampick wood,
And sessions of the birds unravel
The silences of solitude.

The flute of lark and wild canary,
The eloquence of pattering rain—
Evangelists of bud and berry—
Recall the world to joy again.

By miracle of sun and showers,
By exorcism of the dew,
Unfold the dimples of the flowers
From glance of gold and blush of blue.

The buttercup, a child of laughter,
The treasurer of wind and wold,
Follows the breeze, and scatters after
Her dividends of fragrant gold.

Patches of crowding bluets tremble
Upon the breast of the ravine,
Pleiads of turquoise that assemble
And glimmer on a sky of green.

The wild wistaria and bramble
To ledge of flint and moss aspire,
And from the summit of their ramble
Send back their messages of fire—

The rockets of their falling flowers,
Signals of white and purple flame,
To light the triumph of the showers,
And give the Summer sun his fame.

A word is spreading, mad and merry;
A whisper deepens down the glen—
Evangelists of bird and berry
Recall the world to joy again!

ALOYSIUS COLL.

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AN EVENING MUSICALE

By May Isabel Fisk

SCENE—*A conventional, but rather over-decorated, drawing-room. Grand piano drawn conspicuously to centre of floor. Rows of camp-chairs. It is ten minutes before the hour of invitation.* THE HOSTESS, *a large woman, is costumed in yellow satin, embroidered in spangles. Her diamonds are many and of large size. She is seated on the extreme edge of a chair, struggling with a pair of very long gloves. She looks flurried and anxious.* POOR RELATIVE, *invited as a "great treat," sits opposite. Her expression is timid and apprehensive. They are the only occupants of the room.*

HOSTESS—No such thing, Maria. You look all right. Plain black is always very genteel. Nothing I like so well for evening, myself. Just keep your face to the wall as much as you can, and the worn places will never show. You can take my écru lace scarf, if you wish, and that will cover most of the spots. I don't mean my new scarf—the one I got two years ago. It's a little torn, but it won't matter—for you. I think you will find it on the top shelf of the store-room closet on the third floor. If you put a chair on one of the trunks, you can easily reach it. Just wait a minute, till I get these gloves on; I want you to button them. I do hope I haven't forgotten anything. Baron von Gosheimer has promised to come. I have told everybody. It would be terrible if he should disappoint me.

MASCULINE VOICE FROM ABOVE—Sarah, where the devil have you put my shirts? Everything is upside down in my room, and I can't find them. I pulled every blessed thing out of the chiffonier and wardrobe, and they're not there!

HOSTESS—Oh, Henry! You *must* hurry—I'm going to use your room for the gentlemen's dressing-room, and it's time now for people to come. You *must* hurry.

HOST (*from above, just as front door opens, admitting* BARON VON GOSHEIMER *and two women guests*)—Where the devil are my shirts?

HOSTESS (*unconscious of arrivals*)—Under the bed in my room. Hurry!

HOST, *in bath-gown and slippers, dashes madly into wife's room, and dives under bed as women guests enter. Unable to escape, he crawls further beneath bed. His feet remain visible. Women guests discover them.*

GUESTS (*in chorus*)—Burglars! burglars! Help! help!

BARON VON GOSHEIMER, *ascending to the next floor, hears them and hastens to the rescue.*

BARON—Don't be alarmed, ladies. Has either of you a poker? No? That is to be deplored. (*Catches* HOST *by heels, and drags him out. Tableau.*)

HOSTESS (*to* POOR RELATIVE, *giving an extra tug at her gloves*)—There, it's all burst out on the side! That stupid saleslady said she knew they would be too small. Oh, dear, I'm that upset! And these Louis Quinze slippers are just murdering me. I wish it were all over.

Enter BARON VON GOSHEIMER *and women guests.*

HOSTESS—*Dear* baron, how *good* of you! I was just saying, if you didn't come I should wish my musicale

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in Jericho. And, now that you are here, I don't care if any one else comes or not. (*To women guests*) How d'ye do? I must apologize for Mr. Smythe —he's been detained down-town. He just telephoned me. He'll be in, later. Do sit down; it's just as cheap as standing, I always say, and it does save your feet. You ladies can find seats over in the corner. (*Detaining* BARON) *Dear* baron— (*Enter guests.*)

GUEST—So glad you have a clear evening. Now, when *we* gave *our* affair, it *poured*. Of course, *we* had a crowd, just the same. People *always* come to *us*, whether it rains or not. (*Takes a seat. Guests begin to arrive in numbers.*)

HOSTESS—So sweet of you to come!

GUEST—So glad you have a pleasant evening. I am sure to have a bad night whenever I entertain——

HOSTESS (*to another guest*)—So delightful of you to come!

GUEST—Such a perfect evening! I'm *so* glad. I said as we started out, "Now, this time, Mrs. Smythe can't help but have plenty of people. Whenever I entertain, it's sure to—" (*More guests.*)

Telegram arrives, announcing that the prima donna has a sore throat, and will be unable to come. Time passes.

MALE GUEST (*to another*)—Well, I wish to heaven, something would be doing soon. This is the deadest affair I was ever up against.

OMNIPRESENT JOKER (*greeting acquaintance*)—Hello, old man!—going to sing to-night?

ACQUAINTANCE—Oh, yes, going to sing a solo.

JOKER—So low you can't hear it? Ha, ha! (*Guests near by groan.*)

VOICE (*overheard*)—Madame Cully? My dear, she always tells you that you haven't half enough material, and makes you get yards more. Besides, she never sends your pieces back, though I have——

FAT OLD LADY (*to neighbor*)—I never was so warm in my life! I can't imagine why people invite you, just to make you uncomfortable. Now, when I entertain, I have the windows open for hours before any one comes.

JOKER (*aside*)—That's why she always has a frost! Ha, ha!

HOST *enters, showing traces of hasty toilette—face red, and a razor-cut on chin.*

HOST (*rubbing his hands, and endeavoring to appear at ease and facetious*)—Well, how d'ye do, everybody! Sorry to be late on such an auspicious——

JOKER (*interrupting*) — *Sus*picious! Ha, ha!

HOST—occasion. I hope you are all enjoying yourselves.

CHORUS OF GUESTS—Yes, indeed!

HOSTESS—'Sh, 'sh, 'sh! I have a great disappointment for you all. Here is a telegram from my *best* singer, saying she is sick, and can't come. Now, we will have the pleasure of listening to Miss Jackson. Miss Jackson is a pupil of Madame Parcheesi, of Paris. (*Singer whispers to her.*) Oh, I beg your pardon! It's Madame *Mar*cheesi.

DEAF OLD GENTLEMAN (*seated by piano, talking to pretty girl*)—I'd rather listen to you than hear this caterwauling. (OLD GENTLEMAN *is dragged into corner, and silenced.*)

YOUNG WOMAN (*singing*)—"Why do I sing? I know not, I know not! I cannot help but sing. Oh, why do I sing?"

Guests moan softly and demand of one another, Why does she sing?

WOMAN GUEST (*to another*)—Isn't that just the way?—their relatives are always dying, and it's sure to be washday or just when you expect company to dinner, and off they go to the funeral——

BUTLER *appears with trayful of punch-glasses.*

MALE GUEST (*to another*)—Thank the Lord! here's relief in sight. Let's drown our troubles.

THE OTHER — It's evident you haven't sampled the Smythes' punch before. I tell you, it's a crime to spoil a thirst with this stuff. Well, here's how.

WOMAN GUEST (*to neighbor*)—I

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never saw Mrs. Smythe looking quite so hideous and atrociously vulgar before, did you?

NEIGHBOR—Never! Why did we come?

VOICE (*overheard*)—The one in the white-lace gown and all those diamonds?

ANOTHER VOICE—Yes. Well, you know it was common talk that before he married her——

HOSTESS—'Sh, 'sh, 'sh! Signor Padrella has offered to play some of his own compositions, but I thought you would all rather hear something familiar by one of the real composers—Rubens or Chopin—Chopinhauer, I think——

PIANIST *plunges wildly into something.*

VOICE (*during a lull in the music*)—First, you brown an onion in the pan, then, you chop the cabbage——

IN THE DRESSING-ROOM

GUEST (*just arriving, to another*)—Yes, we are awfully late, too, but I always say you never can be too late at one of the Smythes' horrors.

THIN YOUNG WOMAN (*in limp, pink gown and string of huge pearls, who has come to recite*)—I'm awfully nervous, and I do believe I'm getting hoarse. Mama, you didn't forget the lemon juice and sugar? (*Drinks from bottle.*) Now, where are my bronchial troches? Don't you think I could stand just a little more rouge? I think it's a shame I'm not going to have footlights. Remember, you are not to prompt me, unless I look at you. You will get me all mixed up, if you do. (*They descend.*)

HOSTESS (*to elocutionist*)—Why, I thought you were *never* coming! I wanted you to fill in while people were taking their seats. The guests always make so much noise, and the singers hate it. Now, what did you say you would require—an egg-beater and a turnip, wasn't it? Oh, no! That's for the young man who is going to do the tricks. I remember. Are you all ready?

ELOCUTIONIST (*in a trembling voice*)—Ye-es.

HOSTESS—'Sh, 'sh, 'sh!

ELOCUTIONIST—"Aux Italiens.

> "At Paris it was, at the Opéra there,
> And she looked like——"

GUEST (*to another*)—Thirty cents, old chap! I tell you, there's nothing will knock you out quicker than——

HOSTESS—'Sh, 'sh, 'sh!

Young woman finishes, and retires amidst subdued applause. Reappears immediately and gives "The Maniac."

HOSTESS—As I have been disappointed in my best talent for this evening, Mr. Briggs has kindly consented to do some of his parlor-magic tricks.

MR. BRIGGS *steps forward, a large, florid young man, wearing a "made" dress-tie, the buckle of which crawls up the back of his collar.*

BRIGGS—Now, ladies and gentlemen, I shall have to ask you all to move to the other side of the room. (*This is accomplished with muttered uncomplimentary remarks concerning the magician.*)

BRIGGS (*to* HOSTESS)—I must have the piano pushed to the further end. I must have plenty of space. (*All the men guests are pressed into service, and, with much difficulty, the piano is moved.*)

BRIGGS—Now, I want four large screens.

HOSTESS (*faintly*)—But I have only two!

BRIGGS—Well, then, get me a clothes-horse and a couple of sheets.

POOR RELATIVE—You know, Sarah, I used the last two when I made up my bed in the children's nursery yesterday. I can easily get——

HOSTESS (*hastily*)—No, Maria, don't trouble. (*To guests*)—Perhaps, some of you gentlemen wouldn't mind lending us your overcoats to cover the clothes-horse?

CHORUS (*with great lack of enthusiasm*)—Of course! delighted! (*They go for coats.*)

HOSTESS (*to* POOR RELATIVE)—

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Maria, you get the clothes-horse. I think it's in the laundry, or— Oh, I think it's in the cellar. Well, you look till you find it. (*To* BRIGGS)—I got as many of the things you asked for as I could remember. Will you read the list over?

BRIGGS—Turnip and egg-beater——

HOSTESS—Yes.

BRIGGS—Egg, large clock, jar of gold-fish, rabbit and empty barrel.

HOSTESS—I have the egg.

BRIGGS (*much annoyed*)—I particularly wanted the gold-fish, the clock and the barrel.

Guests grow restless.

HOSTESS—Couldn't you do a trick while we are waiting—one with the egg-beater and turnip?

BRIGGS—No; I don't know one.

HOSTESS—Couldn't you make up one?

BRIGGS (*icily*)—Certainly not.

Gloom descends over the company, until the POOR RELATIVE *arrives, staggering under the clothes-horse.*

CHORUS OF MEN GUESTS—Let me help you!

Improvised screen is finally arranged. BRIGGS *performs "parlor magic" for an hour. Guests fidget, yawn and commence to drop away, one by one.*

GUEST (*to* HOSTESS)—Really, we must tear ourselves away. Such a delightful evening!—not a dull moment. And your punch—heavenly! Do ask us again. Good night.

HOSTESS—Thank you so much! So good of you to come.

ANOTHER GUEST—Yes, we must go. I've had a perfectly dear time.

HOSTESS—So sorry you must go. So good of you to come. Good night.

IN THE DRESSING-ROOM

CHORUS OF GUESTS—Wasn't it awful?—Such low people!—Why did we ever come?—Parvenue!

ELOCUTIONIST—I was all right, wasn't I, mama? You noticed they never clapped a bit until I'd walked the whole length of the room to my chair. It just showed how wrought up they were. You nearly mixed me up, though, prompting me in the wrong place; I——

HOSTESS (*throwing herself on sofa as door closes on last guest*)—Well, I'm completely done up! (*To* POOR RELATIVE)—Maria, run up to my room, and get my red-worsted bed-slippers. I can't stand these satin tortures a minute longer. Entertaining is an awful strain. It's so hard trying not to say the wrong thing at the right place. But, then, it certainly went off beautifully. I could tell every one had a such good time!

AT HER WORD

ALL that I heard above her laughter
Was delight for me:
"Really, you are a young man after
My own heart," said she.

"Never a truer word was spoken,"
Quickly I replied.
"Give me your heart to be love's token;
I'll be satisfied."

FELIX CARMEN.

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BREAK A HEART AND MAKE AN ACTOR

By Alfred Henry Lewis

AT BUTTON'S

(1742)

IT is a brisk Midwinter afternoon. In front of Button's Coffee-House a man and woman meet. She gently detains him by a skirt of his rusty coat as he would enter the door. At this, he turns in a fashion of surprise, for, with his weak eyes, he has not noticed her approach.

"Samuel," says the woman, "I came for a little money."

The man is heavy, full-browed, ugly, of age, say, thirty-three; the woman, gross, shapeless, but with a wise, kindly face withal, is even less comely. Her years are roundly fifty-nine.

For all the twenty-six years' difference, the two are husband and wife. She houses herself cheaply near the Tower; he has a garret off Fleet street. It is no want of love which separates them; it is poverty that holds them apart.

When the shapeless old wife asks for money, the rusty husband blinks at her in a mood of thick, sluggish affection. He fumbles in his pockets, and, at last, fishes forth a guinea.

"I had it from Dodsley," says he, as he bestows it upon her. Then, with a sour smile: "It should irk a man of letters to borrow from a once footman. But Dodsley is also a poet, and a rich publisher. I forget the footman when I borrow of Dodsley; I borrow only of Dodsley, the publisher."

"You may be sure, however," responds the wife, "that he grants your requests as Dodsley, the footman. The humble are ever more generous than the high. Dodsley, the publisher, would give you nothing." Then, she ties the guinea in a corner of her kerchief. "It shall board and lodge and warm me for a month."

The gross, unshapely wife turns homeward, while her seedy mate goes into Button's.

As he enters, a thin, hawkish voice is raised in salutation.

"And how fares our worthy Samuel Johnson?"

The thin voice comes from a dwarfish old gentleman with a crooked back and long legs, thinner, these latter, than the voice. This misshapen one is clothed, at vast expense, with full wig and suit of best black velvet, against which his ruffles make a brave display.

"The worthy Samuel Johnson does very well," responds the coming *Rambler*. "And how fares it with the good Mr. Pope, of Twickenham? Your fourth 'Dunciad' would show no fading of your genius. Egad! you smote old Colley Cibber hip and thigh."

"And have you read his letter of retort?" asks Pope. "It is but just come out; you should get it, if only for the varlet's baseness."

Pope is twenty-one years the senior of Johnson. He is rich, powerful, the accepted critic of the age. Also, he was the first to discover Johnson's genius, and has striven to gain for him his degree as a Master of Arts. Wherefore Johnson, who loves power and station when they work to do him good, is become a mighty partisan of the English Homer.

Pope, while vain, and as spiteful as a wasp, would seem to have owned a good heart under his long-flapped, satin

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waistcoat. It was he who upheld Gay in the old day; it was also he who found poetry in the footman Dodsley, and set him to printing books in Pall Mall, and to writing his play of "Cleone."

Pope draws Johnson forward to a seat with the group whereof he is the chief.

The proud fashion of two of these dismays the threadbare Johnson, who is forever on his knees before eminence when linked to wealth. One of this formidable pair is the wit, Chesterfield, high-shouldered, harsh-faced, and forbidding. He is seven years younger than Pope, but double the age of young Horace Walpole, his table mate, who now, at twenty-five, shines forth, the most insufferable coxcomb of the town. Young Walpole sips his wine with a confident patronage toward all the world, an air which would have worn him better, perhaps, were he truly the son of the great Sir Robert, instead of being offspring of that Carr Lord Hervey, to whom court rumor makes oath as his parent.

There be a trio of inconsequent younglings hanging about to hear what Pope and Chesterfield and the perfumed Walpole will say. One is Fielding, who will later write "Tom Jones," but is now emptying theatres with his tragedies. Another, he of the freckles and sandy hair, is Tobias Smollett. This gentleman lives by tying arteries, and does an occasional amputation, and is not yet ripe for "Roderick Random." The pale, whey-faced, silent one is the poet Young, who is about to give us "Night Thoughts."

As one casts his eye over the coffee-room, with its not too cleanly walls and ceiling of darkened wood, one knows it for the same old room it was when Addison first brought there the wits and the wags of Will's. But Addison and Congreve and Steele and Gay and Garth are dead and done, and Swift, over three-score years and ten, with clouded mind, is dying, as he himself puts it, "like a rat in a trap," in Ireland; and, of that ancient guard, none now save Pope remains. The presence, however, of Chesterfield and the adorable Walpole, who already conceives himself to unite the wisdom of Fontanelle with the pen-graces of Anthony Hamilton, proves Button's to have in no part diminished of an olden vogue.

Nor are these the whole of our good company. At nigh hand sits another smaller group. He of the austere, conceited brow is Warburton, the bishop. That burly, bluff, hard-headed man is old Quin, the Covent Garden actor, last of the stilted school of Betterton, Barton Booth and Wilks. The dissolute young blade of the green-and-silver suit, gilt sword, bouquet and eye of insolence, is Foote, a student of the Middle Temple. Soon he will drive folk wild with his mimicries at the Haymarket; finally, he will be crushed by that she-fiend, the Duchess of Kingston, whom he first blackmails and then satirizes.

In a distant corner, belonging to neither group, drinking his wine by himself, sits a rarely handsome man. The others would appear to know him, but they avoid his eye as though from fear. No one there is better clad, no one of more elegant manner; he is the son of a dean, too, and the brother of a clergyman. Why, then, do our fine gentlemen so miss his glance, and yet so plainly shrink from offering him offense? Why, because our gallant is the redoubtable Jemmy MacLean, cutpurse and highwayman. Jemmy is in the fashion himself, has his rooms in St. James's street, and, while he drinks wine in Button's this bright afternoon, his horse waits in the stable to the rear, bridled, bitted, saddled, pistols in holsters, ready with the earliest shadows of the night to be off with his dashing master for the heaths of Bagshot, to look out for fobs and purses. Jemmy will be hanged, presently, at Tyburn for the theft of a parti-colored waistcoat. But he will make his last fling bravely, and in ribbons and posies; and a mighty crowd will cheer him, and morbid George Selwyn—now starving in Paris as a youth of twenty-two, whose close-fisted father holds him down to

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groats and farthings—will ride in the carriage with him, and catch his last syllable, and witness his last kick.

"I met Garrick up the street," remarks Johnson, gruffly. "He was too busy for talk, and hurrying, he said, to a rehearsal. Garrick is become vastly the peacock with his stage success; he would remind one not at all of the wine-merchant of three years ago, or that Garrick who walked into London from Lichfield with me, and not so much silver in his pocket as should serve to fright the fiends away." Johnson says this bitterly, and one may tell how he envies, in his lean poverty, the prosperous Garrick.

"When does your volatile Garrick wed the Woffington?" This from Pope. "Gossip makes it that he and our fair Lass from the Liffey are to trip altarward within the week."

"Davy will never wed Peg," responds Johnson, but without his usual gruffness. "He is turned too much puffed up. Such an alliance he now thinks would be beneath him, and a sheer sacrifice of himself."

"Doubtless, however," says Pope, "he has promised the girl. One may rely upon his promise, I take it."

"One may rely on nothing," returns Johnson, "so much as Garrick's selfishness. You may be sure he regards his present dainty self as far too good to keep that promise."

"To-night, by the way, Garrick will give us his first London performance of 'Lear,'" observes Chesterfield. "And the Woffington is to be Cordelia."

"Garrick?" pipes up young Walpole, in high, intolerant tones. "I see nothing great in this Garrick. I was among the earliest to invade that savage region known as Goodman Fields to look on him, and I may tell you, sirs, I lost my time. As for Woffington—a mere bad actress, an Irish-faced girl! But she has life, sirs, the jade has life."

Walpole takes snuff loftily after this. He cannot foresee how, within three years, his own sister's son will wed the sister of "the jade;" and how, when the earl, his brother-in-law, remonstrates with the jade for permitting the match, the jade will retort: "It is I who should complain, my lord. With my sister single, I had but one beggar to support; now that she marries your curate of a son, I shall have two." And the wedding took place, and nine children came of it. But the superfine young Walpole has no forebode of this, and sneers on with his snuff at the "Irish-faced jade."

"Some one," says Chesterfield, "should instruct Garrick before he essays Lear. I warrant you now he mouths the words as though he cried 'Oysters!' in the street." Then, turning to Johnson: "You, I believe, are a close friend of Garrick; you have a great respect for him as a player."

"I, respect a player?" cries Johnson, with deep disdain. "Sir, I respect Garrick the man, but not Garrick the player! I, respect a player—a fellow who exhibits himself for a shilling—who claps a lump on his back and a lump on his leg, and shouts, 'I am Richard the Third!' Sir, I'll have a wiser use for my respect."

"Gentlemen," observes Pope, and he shakes his plumage-like wig as one who delivers judgment, "Garrick has no competitor. I have seen Betterton, Booth, Wilks; I still see Quin. There has been none so good as Garrick; there is none, and there will be none to match him. As for the Woffington, she is the equal of Oldfield at her best."

Walpole, whose vanity seems nettled by the rebuke, is about to make retort, when the uproar of high debate comes swelling from the other table.

"No marvel, sir, you stand for Pope," roars Quin to Warburton; "he made you a bishop."

"And if he did," breaks in the airy Foote, "Warburton made Pope a Christian, so that score is settled."

"I'll have no quarreling over me, gentlemen," observes Pope across, in his rasping cackle; "I'm not worthy of it."

Warburton would now change the subject, and find one more agreeable to the irascible Quin. He speaks of his intention to edit Shakespeare, and

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asks Quin what he thinks of the idea.

"I think," returns that testy tragedian, "that you dominies might better stick to your own Bible, and let ours alone." Then, Quin calls over to Chesterfield: "Your lordship, I learn, is to be viceroy of Ireland. I trust you will give it better government than we have here."

"What is that?" cries Warburton, in dudgeon. He is sore with Quin's attack upon his plans for the improvement of Shakespeare. "What is that? Do you call this a bad *government?*"

"Sir," retorts Quin, "I call it no government at all. With the purblind king and his German harpy, Walmoden, giving drawing-rooms at St. James, and our drunken Prince Frederick fiddling and fuddling twice a week at Norfolk House, you Tories would call this a government!"

"Man!" observes the scandalized bishop—a stanch Tory, is he—"man, one would think you held our king in disrepute."

"I hold him," returns Quin, stoutly, "and all other kings, alive or dead or yet to be born, in contempt. I am a republican. I would have hanging on the walls of every royal palace for the perusal of your kings, a picture of that Whitehall block and axe which took the head of Charles the First."

Strange to relate, Warburton and the burly Johnson are the only persons present to be in least degree shocked by this outburst. Pope grins, Walpole takes complacent snuff, and even the coming lord-lieutenant is highly patient. As for the cynical Foote, he fairly beams, while bold Jemmy MacLean, the hero of the Bagshot road, beats on his table and shouts, "Hear!"

"And do you justify the regicides?" cries the horror-bitten churchman. "And if you do, by what law, then?"

"By every law the false Charles left them," responds Quin.

Walpole, years after, will tell the story, and avow this reply of Quin to be of all possible the most sweeping and complete.

"I would have you to notice, sir," responds Warburton, warmly, "that every man Jack of the regicides met with a violent death. Call you not that a judgment of heaven?"

"I should not advise you to urge the inference," says Quin, drily, "for, if I mistake not, the same thing might be said of the twelve first followers of the Saviour."

The discomfited bishop sits wordless now, and discussion drifts to politics.

"Many blame my father, the good Sir Robert," observes Walpole, as talk wanders afield, "for the recent war. But what could he do? The Commons forced him into it."

"Sir Robert," returns Chesterfield, "could not prevent a war. He wanted no war; but, sir, as you say, he couldn't help himself. The head of a party is like the head of a snake; it is carried forward by the tail."

A lumbering carriage draws up to the door. A footman in a noble and recognized livery enters, and whispers a word in the ear of Foote, while a patrician face, "beautiful as ever red paints can make it," as Walpole puts it, peers forth from the carriage door.

The Temple student listens to the footman; then, he smirks and gives himself strutting graces as he makes ready to join his fair one for a drive. As he passes Johnson on his way, Foote says:

"Do not the beauteous Peg and our friend Garrick pour a tea to-day? Should you go there, say I'll look in before all is done. I shall, if I escape from that dragoness outside."

II

PEG POURS TEA

WHILE our worthies wrangle over their wine at Button's, Peg Woffington sits thoughtful and alone in the drawing-room of that house in Bow street where she and Garrick have

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their home. Peg, at twenty-three, with her sweet face and her genius, is an Irish Nell Gwynn without the king to love her. This latter, when one reflects on how the reigning monarch is no one better than our pudgy, unclean German, George the Second, stands the good fortune of Peg.

Maugre her youth and her beauty, Peg's brow wears that look of wise responsibility which will come upon one who must think for another as well as for herself. Peg holds a letter in her hand; it is from Polly, her sister, a girl still at school, and to whom Peg despatched recent word to come and dwell with her. Polly will come, too, and later wed that poor earl's son, the exquisite Walpole's nephew, as recounted.

"Polly cannot come to me as I am," reflects Peg. "David and I must become husband and wife, or separate. Polly shall find a clean hearthstone to sit down by."

The servant enters, and hangs the kettle in the wide fireplace. The copper kettle has the burnish of gold. It is a complacent and tractable kettle, and, straightway, sets up its steamy song.

The servant arranges a tea equipment on a side table. Evidently, from the elaborate preparation, a dozen callers are looked for. With the last of it, she lights the wax candles bristling from certain silver sconces which branch from the carved oaken breast of the chimney. Even though it be in mid-radiance of afternoon, the lights are needed. The windows are small, the diamond panes of a dullish glass, and even the little light to filter dimly through them is half-smothered by the brocade hangings.

Peg's bright, deep eyes go roving over the room. It is an apartment of some majesty; high ceilings and wainscots and floor of polished oak. It is comfortable, too, in a high-backed way, with its stiff chairs and prim settles, and prints on the walls, and mirrors here and there. Peg owns a use for these last, having a notion to see her pretty face reflected as often as she may, being vain, as maidens should be.

Peg's glance takes in chair and print and mirror—every corner of the place. As she gazes, her face clouds with a fond sorrow. Peg is looking on that scene of pleasant comfort for the last time, and feels some forecast of it.

"David must decide to-night," whispers Peg to herself as she again sits brooding over her sister's letter. "And what will he decide? He will decide nothing. He will palter and promise and put off. We are not to marry, I know that. David is too vain and holds himself too fine for an Irish actress whose conduct, to say the least, has been much too careless. However, I must bring on the last act of our love drama. Polly must be thought of. I shall say, 'To-night;' David will say nothing. And then," muses Peg, "and then, I shall end it; I shall go."

There is a quick step, and nimble, small, sharp of feature and decisively the fop in dress, Garrick springs into the room. Garrick is of even years with young Horace Walpole, and as gaudily the macaroni; but, being somewhat the peasant in emanation, he lacks of that confidence of caste which so shines in the high face of the other.

While Garrick enters with a skip and a spring, it is from no lightness of the spirit. Jealousy darkens his forehead; he has come across fresh dulcet traces of one of those love-affairs which will ever distinguish the exuberant Peg.

"When did you last see Hanbury Williams?" Garrick bursts forth. Both flush, for when all is in, what are they save a boy and a girl in love? "When did you last talk with him?"

Peg waxes crafty; considering how she will that day tell Garrick he should marry her, she resolves upon concealment.

"Hanbury Williams?" repeats Peg, arching a brow of wondrous innocence.

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"I haven't seen him nor talked with him for, lo! an age."

"Madame," retorts Garrick, indignantly, "I wish I might believe you. But I have proof how you saw him here, while I was at rehearsal, and not an hour ago."

"And is not that an age?" asks Peg, pretending a modest droop of her lids. Being discovered, Peg will be brazen and take refuge in her wit.

Garrick fumes up and down, and knows not what to say. In his soul, he loves Peg—loves her almost as well as he loves his precious self. He does not love her well enough to wed her, truly, but he could not see her with another and miss a pang.

Peg speaks to shift the subject.

"And how did your rehearsal go? Who read my part of Cordelia?"

"The prompter read your part," grumbles Garrick. "The rehearsal went well enough." Then, forgetting Hanbury Williams in his ardor over the coming production of "Lear": "I have been studying madness from a real lunatic. Do you recall how that father in Tavistock Row let his child fall from a window, and saw it dashed on the stones below? That was last week. He has raved like Bedlam ever since. I was with him for an hour. I studied him until I can mimic his rolling eye, his brow of anguish, his arm-toss of despair, his shriek as the broken little one dies in his arms. Mark you, my Lear will be a triumph; it will be a picture of the true."

There is a creaking at the stair-head; it is from a step stiffened of age. The latch lifts, and old Colley Cibber enters, leading a little, old lady who, with her four-score years, and leaning on a crutched cane, is almost a decade older than the wrinkled laureate himself.

"And where do you suppose now Bracey took me?" asks old Colley, as he and the once great actress, Mrs. Bracegirdle, beam greetings on Peg and Garrick. "The idea, too, of a lady of eighty years, and a gentleman who soon will be, trotting about to graveyards and afternoon teas in dead Winter! But where should you think now Bracey made me go? To Saint Clement's Danes; she must needs leave flowers to freeze on the tomb of poor Will Mountford, though out and gone he is these even fifty years."

"And why not?" demands Mrs. Bracegirdle. "Where should be the hardship? I went in my chair, and came here in my chair. The day is not cold."

"It was I who dragged her here," says old Colley. "She would take me to Saint Clement's Danes, so I made the bargain. 'Bracey,' says I, 'if I go to the churchyard with you and your flowers for Will, you must run round to Peg's with me, and warm yourself with a cup of tea.'"

"Do not believe him, child," says Mrs. Bracegirdle. "One might think, to hear Cibber, I didn't want to come. Indeed, it was I who proposed it. 'Cibber,' I said, 'I will call on Mistress Woffington. It shall be for a compliment. The oldest actress will call upon the greatest.'"

"Egad! Bracey," breaks in old Colley, who is clicking about the room in his high-heeled shoes, shaking now and then a cloud of powder from his luxuriant wig, "egad! Bracey, that was prettily said. On my soul, it was! And, Davy, you needn't look so glum. Bracey and I agreed as we came along that you were a fairly clever fellow enough."

"But this Will Mountford," cries Peg, who has been striving to edge in a word, and is each time overpowered by these vivacious old folk, "who will be your Will Mountford? Was he a sweetheart, madame?" Peg looks quite tender and feels quite tender, too; for Peg is susceptible, and would fain scent a love-affair of the long ago. "Was he your lover, madame?"

"No, child; no lover," responds Mrs. Bracegirdle. "But this is an anniversary. It was just fifty years ago to-day when, not two squares from here, Lord Mohun, with a coach and a band of Mohocks, tried to kidnap me as I was returning from playing at the theatre.

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Will Mountford defended me, and Lord Mohun ran him through with his sword, and killed him. Poor Will! a great actor he was, too! And so, once a year, I go and place flowers on Will's grave. No, child; Will was no lover of mine."

"Bracey never had a lover," breaks in old Cibber. "She was an example for Diana, was Bracey. And beautiful! You should have seen Bracey at thirty! A flower was a fool to her! The peerage knelt before her—gad! the nobility sighed round Bracey's foot-stool by the scores. Yes, forsooth! even the great Congreve loved the cruel Bracey, but she drove him from her. Do you remember his lines, madame?" This to Mrs. Bracegirdle: "How did they run?

> "'Would I were free from this restraint,
> Or else had power to win her;
> Would she could make of me a saint,
> Or I of her a sinner.'

"A very pretty quatrain, that," concludes old Cibber, oracularly, "and told Congreve's case exactly."

Mrs. Bracegirdle smiles on old Cibber, as though to hear of her aforetime lovers is not distasteful, even though she turned a deaf ear to their sorrows in their day.

The room begins to fill. Macklin, who gave us Shylock as he should be, and not as that vulgar buffoon he had been, arrives; the heavy Johnson comes in not far behind; and then appears the lively Foote, who, it would seem, escaped from his "dragoness" of the carriage; and, after Foote, a dozen others, among them Reynolds, the portrait-painter.

Tea and talk go merrily forward, and all save Garrick are gay. Garrick is dull, and a bit pensive. This want of flash is laid by the others at the door of Lear, whom Garrick must personate this night. Being his first London Lear, the critics and wits are sharpening tooth and claw to rend him. Mayhap, it is this pending peril of the critics to make serious the eye of Garrick.

Old Cibber, himself in dotard fashion in love with Peg, hangs about her dear elbows as she pours the tea. With his wrinkled hatchet face and voluminous wig, he looks not unlike an aged crested bird of prey.

Foote makes a smart remark upon old Cibber's devotion to Peg.

"I heard them say," suggests Foote, "as you and old Owen Swiney would dangle about our Peg in wrinkled rivalry, that the three of you reminded folk of Suzanna and the Elders."

Old Colley snorts fiercely, and makes scornful remarks upon the unripe Foote.

"What would you give," retorts Foote, willing to jeer a little at old Cibber's years since now the latter jeers at his, "what would you give to be as young as I?"

"Why, then," responds the oldster, with a gleam, "I'd consent to be as great a fool."

This costs Foote a laugh all round. The porous Johnson takes advantage of the general mirth to win for himself his ninth cup of tea.

"You are hard upon me, sir," says Foote, feigning humility. "You would treat me better had you heard me defend you when the caustic Mr. Pope —who said he saw it thirty years ago —assailed your comedy of 'Cinna.'"

"'Cinna,' sir," responds old Cibber, interested in spite of himself, "'Cinna' is a tragedy, not a comedy."

"Indeed!" says Foote, assuming mild amazement. "Now, see how one may be trapped into error! I supposed 'Cinna' must be a comedy because Mr. Pope declared how he laughed at it from beginning to end."

It is now old Cibber who falls forfeit to a common peal of mirth. Even he, the old victim, is himself seen to grin.

"Your wit, young sir," says he to Foote, "will take you far. Have a care that it does not take you over Holborn Hill in a cart."

Old Cibber and Foote make up their differences with snuff from the former's diamond-encrusted mull.

Macklin and Johnson fall to controversy concerning the art of the actor. Johnson, albeit the pacific Reynolds

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tries to lead away the talk to gentler fields, cannot repress his customary harshness.

"A player," cries Johnson, in rumbling insolence, "and what is he? Sir, a ballad-singer is a higher man, for he does two things: he recites and he sings, there is both recitation and music in his performance. Your player only recites."

"And yet, sir," says old Cibber, who thinks better of Johnson than Johnson does of him, "and yet, sir, Garrick tells me how you, yourself, have written a tragedy. If you have it by you, it would give me prodigious pleasure to read it."

"It is the tragedy of 'Irene,'" responds Johnson, his face beginning to glow. "I shall have the honor, sir, to send it to your house in the morning. It has not been acted."

"But it shall be acted," breaks in Garrick, "so soon as ever I call a stage *my own*."

Johnson and Garrick exchange looks; to one quick to perceive, it is plain how beneath the vanity of the one and the morose envy of the other, each for each carries sincere affection.

III

GARRICK DOES "KING LEAR"

THE tea-drinking guests depart, while Peg and Garrick make ready for their short journey to Drury Lane where Lear must walk before his judges of the pit. Now they be alone, Garrick turns bitterly solemn; Peg dons a grave, sweet look.

As Garrick is ready for the street, Peg draws him to a seat beside her on a great, oaken settle that stands in the corner of the chimney.

"What is it, love?" asks Garrick, a trifle disturbed by Peg's gravity.

Peg collects herself; she knows the end is at hand.

"David, when is it to be?"

"Of what do you speak?" he replies. Then comes a flush, for he understands how it is their marriage she asks about.

"When are we to wed, David?"

"Let us put off this talk," says Garrick, a sudden irritation in his tones. "It may unstring the both of us; it may spoil my Lear to-night." This last he gets off in real terror.

"No, we will not put by this talk," returns Peg, firmly. "It has been put by too long as it is. As for your Lear, should I bind your heart to the rack, and torture it till it breaks, you'll but play the better for it. David, we must be wed to-night or not at all; I'll wait no longer."

"Peg," he replies, nervously, "don't be unreasonable. You know I love you."

"To-night it must be, or not at all," she repeats.

"Dear, it would be foolish."

"You have said enough, David." Peg's face is whiter now. "And yet, I knew it." Her great eyes fill up, and a sob catches in her throat. "After all," Peg continues, "it is better thus. Surely, it is good to know at last and truly where we stand with each other."

"I shall speak of this after the theatre," says Garrick, still in a flutter.

"Do you think so?" asks Peg, in a queer voice.

"And you, yourself, will look at it in another light to-morrow."

"Perhaps," says Peg.

It is a night when the taverns, the coffee-houses and the clubs give up their last man in favor of the theatre. Box and gallery, pit and stall, are packed; the high and the low are come. It is a throng much mixed; the noble rubs elbows with the nameless, St. James jostles St. Giles, and the butchers of Clare Market bicker for places with the beaux of Mayfair. If there be common ground in British taste where prince and peasant meet, it lies in this British passion for the play. And London town turns out to-night, for its fresh favorite, the young Garrick, and the beloved Woffington, will present "King Lear."

Garrick, for himself, was never more

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upon a strain; his talk with Peg burns him. Vaguely, he can tell how a calamity is pending, and how he stands within the shadow of disaster. In his shaken soul, he recalls the recent scene. Peg's manner was a threat of itself. What did she mean? What will she do? These are the queries that set Garrick to be torn at by the wolves of long-toothed apprehension. His fear of unformed somethings that he cannot name, now drives him cold and hot.

Garrick's is a shallow nature, all ripple and sparkle and flash; Peg's currents flow more deeply, and Garrick cannot fathom them. To his vanity, there comes no thought how Peg may take herself from out his hands, and doom him to oaken loneliness in Bow street. That she should leave him is incredible; no such grim answer to his query of "What will she do?" once knocks at the door of his conceit. Nervous, irritable, morally as well as physically timid, our weak Garrick will fret himself into a very flame of wretchedness.

Garrick thinks on Peg and his coming Lear in one and the same breath. How will he play the part now that these love-doubts are crowding on his heart? His fears for a mighty failure begin to mount.

The curtain goes up.

Garrick is smitten of terrors and tremblings. But he finds Peg's words come true; though his heart be on the rack, he plays the better for it. Never has he so felt the surge and sweeps of genius to carry him along. Now is the mad old Lear a mad old Lear in very truth; and the critical pit, commonly so guarded and cold, is as much thrilled and played upon as ever the most darkened corner of the galleries.

Nor is our brilliant Peg one whit behind. The gentle, sweet Cordelia was never so gentle or so sweet as now when the great Woffington portrays her; and, when Garrick, as Lear, in mad simplicity puts wondering finger to her cheek, with the line, "Be these tears wet?—yes, faith!" it shocks him like a knife-stab to find on the face of Peg the wet, real tears, indeed.

Surely, for all the victory, there be acrid ones to carp, and hairsplit, and vent a spleen.

"He does not enter into the infirmities of a man four-score and upward," drawls Walpole, turning a languid eye on Chesterfield.

"The pit finds no fault, at least," responds the other, as he looks down upon the critics tossing in a storm of approbation.

"And he lacks dignity," continues the ineffable Walpole; "and his voice is too loud, and wants in sympathy. Now, the Irish jade does better, though her voice is worse than his. In the curse, too, he begins too low and ends too high."

Thus, vapidly, proceeds young Walpole in a dawdle of pretended criticism, until the crook-backed Pope comes into the box, and puts him to flight with the word that, in all his years, he has seen nothing to be the equal of that Lear.

"The dog is clever, Bracey," says old Colley, as he aids the ancient Mrs. Bracegirdle to call her chair at the close. "Yes, zooks! the dog has genius!"

"But the girl, Cibber," returns Mrs. Bracegirdle. "It was real grief she gave us, and a soul pierced through and through. I tell you that now, in my eightieth year, I've seen the true empress of the theatres."

"Davy is great," observes Johnson to Reynolds, as, taking the painter's arm, the two move away together. "Davy is assuredly great. And, while I look upon his acting, it strikes home to me how there is that to a great player, whether it be art or nature, which is beyond me either to grasp, appreciate or comprehend."

When, with the last curtain, Garrick is off the stage, he casts anxious, haggard eyes about for Peg. He hardly hears, and only half responds to,

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the commendations which break upon him like a tempest.

Where is his Peg? Not in the greenroom, truly; while a message to her dressing-room brings no response save the word that it is empty.

"She will be home before me," murmurs Garrick, in a flash of hope. "How deeply shall I congratulate her for to-night!"

Then, for the earliest time, a cold thought creeps about his heart like a snake; she may be lost to him.

Garrick hurries to their Bow-street house. He meets nothing save the lonesome, oaken rooms. These would seem to mock him, since no Peg is there. He wrings his hands, and tosses to and fro about the place. He calls Peg's name.

"Where is she?" he cries.

Far away in quiet Teddington, Peg is crying herself to sleep. This is hidden from Garrick; he knows only that he has lost her.

Will she return to him?

If the echoes be honest echoes, they will answer, "Never."

Broken and alone, Garrick sinks into Peg's chair, and weeps as for ruined hopes and dreams destroyed. The candles burn out in darkness; the fire dies on the hearth, and leaves the room as cheerless as his heart. And so, throughout the night, Garrick sits unhappy, mourning for his lost one; the hour of greatest triumph is the hour of his mightiest desolation.

PLENITUDE

SO long have I desired thee, and so deep
My heart's hid well, whose waters sung thy name
Over and over till the restless flame
Of Love stood still to listen, that I weep
Now when I have thee in my arms, to keep
Forever. O Belovèd, I became
So perfected in thee, I have no aim
Beyond thee, and no harvest more to reap!

So still is all the world, I feel afraid!
Is this that mystic Silence, by whose power
The waiting spirits of the void are made
In mortal mold? I feel my bridal bower
Transcendently enlarged, myself—dismayed—
A dazed intruder on God's working hour.

ELSA BARKER.

THE GROWLS OF A GRIZZLED BACHELOR

OLD bachelors know a great deal about women. If they did not, they wouldn't be old bachelors.

Nobody knows why a woman, when she trips over a chair-rocker, always blames her husband for it as soon as he comes home.

During courtship, he talks and she listens. After marriage, the order is reversed, or else they both talk, and the neighbors listen.

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THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN'S NARRATIVE

By the Baroness von Hutten

"IT was pathetic and—ridiculous, a combination that often produces great charm," the beautiful woman began, sipping her green mint, meditating. "Shall I tell it to you? It would make a good story."

Although the stories that people tell, with kindling eye, to friends who try to write, do not usually fill the friends' souls with the enthusiasm expected, I said yes, for she was so beautiful in her flaming gown, the star in her hair was such a poor thing in comparison with the two blue ones under the arched brows, that I assented. "Yes, tell me. I need copy."

"It was in Maine, by the sea. I have a house there, and spend a month in it every Summer. I am very much interested in raising—" She took up her glass, and, as she sipped, I filled up the blank with, "Easter lilies? Violets?"

"Pigs!" she added, serenely. "Once, last Summer, my maid fell ill, and, as she had been doing some rather important sewing, I looked up a local seamstress. I found her in a small, brown house on the outskirts of the village—one of those shingle-houses without any paint that one sometimes longs to see, just as something purely American, when one has been long abroad.

"She was a wee old woman, quite sixty-five, I should think, with a knot of sandy hair, so small that one wondered how she managed to cover her skull, and a plaintive face, with very far-apart, gray eyes. She was glad to have the work, and, after a short talk, in which I learned that she supported her mother, aged ninety, and that she had never been in a railway train, I left her in the neat little sunny room.

"A few days later, I went back, for I liked prowling about, and she interested me. I used to watch her sew. It was white work—table-cloths to be hemmed, and so on—and her little, knotted, brown hands, flying over the white stuff, had a certain charm.

"Well, at last one day, I asked her what she thought about during all the long hours, while she worked alone. She looked up, startled, and then—blushed. It was a pretty, girlish blush, too.

"'Miss Brown,' she said, shyly, 'I am a homely, little, old woman, but I have—a love-story.'"

"And *you*," I interrupted, "said that you had always known it. That is what you call being sympathetic!"

The beautiful woman smiled. "I just asked her to tell me all about it."

"And she did?"

"Yes. This is the way she told it: 'His name is Waldo Green, and I've kept company with him since I was twenty. He's very handsome and very smart. I—sometimes wonder—why he hasn't got tired of me!'"

"And then, you smiled at her, and she felt that she looked just like you, and that, of course, he hadn't tired of her. Go on."

"Well, I asked why they hadn't married. Guess why they hadn't!"

"A family feud? Hereditary insanity? No money?"

"No. She laid down her work, and said, quite tranquilly, without a shadow of resentment: 'He has never been able to quite make up his mind!' Just think of it! Then, she added that

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he came to see her Wednesdays and Sundays, and that her mother quite chirped up when he was there."

"Did you ever see the mother?"

"Yes. She was rather—fearsome, but beautifully neat, and really quite well-dressed. She seemed to me like some old idol, on which her poor devotee hung all the things she should have worn herself.

"Well, one day, I went to see them, and Miss Gaines herself opened the door, instead of the hard-featured, *very* unalluring old servant, Abby. And Miss Gaines had a bow of blue ribbon in her hair; or, rather, she had a few hairs in a bow of blue ribbon on top of her head. She had also a blue bow at her throat, and she wore a black-silk gown. She was quivering with excitement. 'Waldo is here,' she whispered; 'Mr. Green, you know, and he thinks he has made up his mind!'

"I couldn't resist having a peep at Waldo, so I went in, and found that 'mother,' who, of late had been very well, and much in the 'sitting-room,' was banished, and in her chair, by the window, sat Waldo, evidently much occupied in making up his mind. He was a small, old man, with high shoulders and a querulous face. I didn't like him. Mother was unusually intelligent that day, and seemed much pleased over the prospect of a wedding. She had always liked weddings, though most people preferred funerals. Abby, I found, on the contrary, annoyed by Waldo's presence, and by the impending 'made-up' condition of his mind. I quite disliked Abby."

"*Do* hurry. When you left mother——?"

"When I left mother, and passed through the sitting-room, Miss Gaines stood by the little mirror, removing the hair from the blue bow." The beautiful woman's voice was mournful. "'Where is Mr. Green?' I asked. She looked at me bravely. 'He has went home. He—he couldn't quite make up his mind.' . . . I really wanted to *shake* Waldo," the beautiful woman went on, after a pause.

"Why didn't you? He would have been delighted, I am sure."

"Well, I did catch up with him, and —talk with him on my way through the village. I asked him whether he didn't think it about time to decide what he meant to do with his future!"

"You didn't!"

"I did. And he said, quite seriously, that he was very comfortable at home, and that it was a pity to be rash."

She paused for a second, so lovely in her amused concern that I wished she would not speak at once.

Then: "The next time I saw her, she told me that she was going to dismiss Abby. It appears that Abby had been—well, 'making up' to Waldo. I *hate* Abby."

The men were coming, and in a minute she would be surrounded.

"So do I," I said, vehemently. "I loathe her. But tell me—you saw them all again?"

"Yes; but there is no change. Abby is living in the village, mother is as fresh as a daisy, Miss Gaines sews, and thinks of her 'love-story,' and grows older; and Waldo—" the men had come —"and Waldo is still trying to make up his mind!"

SMATHERS (*consolingly*)—After all, marriage is a lottery.

DE VORSE—Yes; but the courts will not recognize alimony as a gambling debt.

IN these later days, riches take automobiles and ride away.

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THE PROFESSOR'S LOVE-STORY

Though my professor doesn't marry—
Apologies to Mr. Barrie!

IN May, in May, one genial May,
I shut my stuffy study up,
And set forth on a woody way
To drink the nectar from her cup.
There, alien from the joys of love,
I came upon Aspasia,
Her white arms filled with blossoms of
Robinia Pseudacacia.

Which were the sweeter, they or she?
No problem that, to stagger one!
A look, a smile—oh, heart of me,
Behold thy schooling all undone!
And on succeeding days were seen
This don and his Dulcinea
Out walking under branches green
Of *Fagus ferruginea.*

But not for long. I'm forty-three,
While her years were not *half* of mine.
I fondly hoped that I might be
A *Quercus* to her clinging vine—
And told her so, the girl whom I
Had once surnamed Urania!
She only said: "She guessed that my
True genus was *Castanea.*"

'Twas quite forgiven long ago,
But from my desk I never stir;
For all that's sweet or white, I know,
Would whisper me of May and her.
She sleeps, till better times are ripe,
'Neath myrtle and veronica,
Enguarded by a splendid type
Of *Salix Babylonica.*

EDWARD W. BARNARD.

SHE WASN'T A WIDOW

"WHY didn't she marry him?"

"Well, you see, her folks were opposed to the match; and then, besides, he didn't propose."

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LAUGHTER

WE laughed together once—since then,
What bitterness of silent days
Divides us on the ways of men!

Perchance, it is a trifling thing,
A memory grotesque. And, still,
I cannot hate, remembering.

Unhealed the wound, and sore the smart;
Yet, for that mirth we one day knew,
Not all your enemy, my heart;

Not all your enemy—nay, less;
When, still, above my anger thrills
That ghostly note of happiness.

Distant and faint, yet over-true,
Strange that so light a thing should bring
The olden, tender thought of you.

McCrea Pickering.

THE LORD OF CREATION

SOME men don't know how much they are worth; most don't know how little.

The boy of twelve who doesn't know more than his father, needs attention.

Man is not satisfied to know a thing; he must have everybody else know it.

"Fools go in crowds;" man loves companionship.

It is wiser for man to trust to his luck than to his wits; he is likely to have more of the former than the latter.

If there is anything that a man doesn't know, he doesn't know it.

Man often feels that he is a sly dog when, in reality, he is but a sorry cur.

No man is the same all the time; which is why it is possible to have some respect for every man at some time.

Man is disappointed if he doesn't get what he wants, and dissatisfied if he does.

A man is always satisfied that he can take care of himself. His satisfaction generally ends there.

L. de V. Matthewman.

MISTRESS—Do you wake up easily?
Cook—Oh, yes, ma'am. Just knock on my door.

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EXHIBIT A

By Kate Jordan

(Mrs. F. M. Vermilye)

BETWEEN the matinée and the performance at night, Miss Cawtrey always had a light dinner served in her dressing-room. In the most exquisite of négligées, with flowers about her, and occasional intimates dropping in for a few moments' gossip, she was wont to lie on her divan in the state of relaxation prescribed by her fashionable physician.

Miss Dora Cawtrey was leading woman at The Regent, a small, long-established London theatre, whose box- and stall-patrons had, for the most part, their names in Debrett. The play might be unpopular, but the star's personality "drew," because she was an enchanting beauty who was also a tantalizing mystery. No one knew anything about her. Her history—prior to the Autumn night when she walked on in "Notre Dame," as a court lady with but one line to say, and took away the breath of the watchers by her surprising loveliness—was lost in a mist which Miss Cawtrey never lifted. She never talked of her childhood, her parentage, former places or people. She seemed born without any past prior to her twenty-fourth year of age. When wonderful things were told of her early life, she smiled. When a charming, romantic history was hinted at, she smiled. Her smile was lovely. When any one had the curiosity boldly to question her, she stared. Her stare was disquieting. She was a sphinx. She might have manufactured a most bewitching history for herself had she cared to do so, and no one would have questioned it. But Dora had her code, and a teller of lies was hateful to her.

"If she were only a foreigner, you know, one could accept her without question," Lord Dugro had said, at his club. "As an American, her mother might have done the washing in a mining camp—and who would care? As a Frenchwoman, she might have had forebears in the pomade and coiffure line, and we'd have swallowed the whole bally thing, you know. But this woman, the loveliest creature under heaven, against whom there is no whisper in the present, whom we welcome in our homes, and need and want and delight in, don't you know, but who never speaks of herself, and about whom we know nothing—is an Englishwoman! She's never even admitted that much. But she *is* English in blood, bone, sinew, voice, expression, movement. Yet, who and what she was before she came out at The Regent, I defy any one to find out."

This expressed London's opinion generally, yet no one was in the least surprised when Dora Cawtrey's engagement to the young Duke of Bracebridge was announced, and the news was bruited over the world that the King had been the first to congratulate her. Miss Cawtrey was "chummy" with kings, princes and the like.

So, on the particular afternoon when she lay upon her divan in her dressing-room, after the matinée, with roses almost as tall as herself bending their perfumed heads from great vases near her, she was thinking of Bracebridge, and her eyes, of an odd, glistening slate-blue, were warm with her

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dreams, for she loved him extremely. His title and the splendor of his wealth were on one side, and held her but little; on the other, he, in the strength, confidence and beauty of his twenty-eight clean years, engrossed her completely. Strange as it may appear, Dora loved this man, who happened to be a duke.

For the twentieth time, she read his last letter. It was an expression of idolatry from the first line to the last. She kissed it, tucked it under the silk pillow, her hand, with the big, ruby engagement-ring, clasping it. She closed her eyes. Far off, it seemed many miles beyond her land of dreams, she heard Suzanne's metallic French voice:

"Dis pairson cannot to see Miss Cawtrey—*non*. She is rest herself, and she cannot to see dis pairson."

"'E soys—" she heard Grigson, the door-keeper, commence, and then break off. "Well, by Jingo, 'ere 'e his 'is bloomin' self—cheeky fer a Hitalian, s' 'eaven 'elp me!"

Still Dora, with her fingers clasping her ducal love-letter, dreamed on. It was a usual thing for many people to attempt to see her, when she had no desire to lay eyes upon them.

"Mees Cawtrey cannot see you. W'at ees your business? If you tell me, I will spik wiz her," she heard Suzanne continue, irritably.

"Just give her my card, please. You need say nothing."

Before the last sentence was completed—in fact, before three words had been spoken—Dora's expression had changed. The dream fled from her face. A look leaped into it not unlike that of a listening animal expecting danger. She moved quickly to her elbow. Her features stiffened. Suzanne found her so when she came cautiously in, her black eyes snapping with temper. Dora heard nothing she said. She took the card, and fixed a frozen stare upon it: "Arturo Boldino."

"He may come in," she said, rising, and sweeping out the laces on her gown.

Suzanne obeyed, with a feeling of awe; her mistress looked like the dead. A moment later, the visitor entered alone, and found Miss Cawtrey standing straight and tall and very proud, her eyes level with his. The man was a Latin, but his precise nationality could not be determined in a glance; Italian, perhaps, or a Levantine, or a Spaniard; so much his black eyes, his oiled, curled hair, full lips, light figure, accentuated dressing and aggressive extract of musk, proclaimed.

"What do you want?" Dora asked, as she might speak to a dismissed servant who ventured to annoy her.

The man parted his mustache, lovingly, sneered and smiled.

"In the English climate, you have grown very businesslike, Miss Jenny Green."

He could see that the name was like a lash through the thin cloak. Though she shivered, she remained with her head up, an abysmal contempt in her level gaze.

"What do you want?" she asked, again. "I can give you ten minutes; so, say whatever you have come to say. Ten minutes." She pointed to the clock.

"Then, I must be businesslike, too," he smiled. "Shall we not sit down?" She appeared not to hear him, and again looked at the clock. "No? Then, you force us both to be uncomfortable, instead of cozy—as such old friends should be. Eh? Well, I see you are not disposed to talk. You are in one of those icy moods which used to annoy your—protector. Ah, how he used to fly up when you looked at him so! He had a temper, despite his sixty-odd years, had your good friend, Rica."

Dora stood patiently, her face unchanging.

"Is it bad taste to recall those days? But I do it for a purpose. It is that you may realize how very deeply my finger is in the very good, rich pie of your very successful, flattered life."

"Let me congratulate you," said Dora, with an air of weariness. "You

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speak English better than when you were Señor Rica's servant."

He laughed, and, drawing out his perfumed handkerchief, caressed his lips with it.

"Dear lady, at last I hear something from you besides the eternal and very rude question—what do you want? Believe me, your commendation is most sweet to me. For, see, I am ambitious. When you came first to Matanzas, eight years ago, and lived your secluded life with my master behind those white walls, I was a coachman first, then a valet. After you disappeared, and your hat and little boat were found drifting in the Yumuri—in fact, after your death, when it was inferred your beautiful body had been carried out to the sea—I became secretary to Señor Rica. On his death, it was found that I was remembered most generously in his will. There are those who said I had taken advantage of his condition when he was half-delirious; but that is nothing. This tells you I am ambitious, does it not?"

She was very white, and her brows met in a line of pain.

"Of course, you have come to sell your silence for money?"

"How you misjudge me!" he said, sadly. "You always did. As Señor Rica's coachman, you thought me a spy. Later, when I was his valet, and merely by applying my ear to the door heard your sobs as he beat you——"

"You loathsome toad!" she muttered, in controlled fury, like a dangerous thing in leash, "if you say another word of that past time, I'll have you flung into the street. What has brought you here? Say it plainly, receive your answer, and go!"

His sneering defiance was now a healthy thing of full growth.

"I will. I am absolutely merciless," he said, dropping his sentimental tone. "I was in India when I picked up an English paper, and read of you—read also that one of your peculiarities was an objection to being much photographed, except occasionally in costume, as Lady Teazle, for instance; an odd dislike in an actress, but we know, do we not, that wigs and patches make fairly good masks? Well, I thought no more of the newspaper item at the time. Later, a traveling showman came to Bombay with the new invention, the kinetoscope. One of his views showed Bond street on a sunny May day, all movement and sunshine. It was most perfect, and filled the eyes of some of those homesick Anglo-Indians with tears. The foremost figure in the picture was a beautiful woman, who opened her parasol, and stepped into a waiting victoria. It was you. I sat there in amazement, and, of course, knew then that your apparent drowning in Cuba was a cheat, as I had always suspected. I fancied I was looking on Jenny Green, who was flourishing in London under the same conditions as I had known her; but my interest was whipped up when the showman announced that this was one of the few photographs of the beauty and actress, Dora Cawtrey. The people around me never knew what made me laugh so heartily. I like being amused that way; it is a great aid to digestion. Well, it is possible I might never have annoyed you; but, after a time, business brought me to London, and I, like the rest of the world, heard the astounding news that the Duke of Bracebridge was to make you his duchess. Then, I made up my mind. You could be useful to me. I first went to see you in your new play. Your blond hair was covered by a red wig, but one good look told me that you were Rica's Jenny. The result?—I am here. You think I want money. I don't. No amount you might offer to pay me would weigh the slightest with me. It is five years since the day your boat was found upturned in the Yumuri, and, since then, I've made much money—oh, very much—in many lands, and not always by very honorable means, I admit to you. You see, we are both adventurers, cheats, liars, and we can speak the truth to each other. Now, I want what money cannot buy—unassailable power, position. You can give me these."

She had turned from him, and her

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sad eyes were gazing into the mirror. Pain had wiped the scorn from her face.

"As the Duchess of Bracebridge, you can make me a personage. I shall carefully select an obscure, Levantine title—no one will look me up. Even if they do, no one will believe them. Let the Duchess of Bracebridge vouch for my genuineness, count me as her friend, make me one of her house-parties, take me on her yacht, and my status becomes impregnable. I shall make a marriage for position. I shall actually live in my most impossible dreams."

He was terribly in earnest; his sallow skin had become putty-white, his nose was like an eagle's.

When Dora answered him, her voice was hopeless and quiet.

"I refuse you, absolutely."

"Oh, no; you are not mad. I cannot think that."

"I shall say nothing about you. Foist yourself on society, if you will, lie, steal, and I'll not unmask you. But you shall not make me a partner. I will not, even by a nod, recognize your existence."

"And you will be fool enough to ruin yourself, rather than do what I ask?"

"I've not admitted that you can ruin me. It's your word against mine. If I choose to lie—a thing I've never done—I've an idea the Duke of Bracebridge will thrash you soundly."

"Ah, I cannot but admire you. You have the repose of a *grande dame*—you, Jenny Green. It is marvelous. But—alas, for the repose—I have incontrovertible proof." And Boldino sighed. "I have letters written by you to the señor. You were not always averse to being photographed. I have a half-dozen pictures of you, taken in Matanzas, some in the garden with your master and mine, and in several the scar just above your right eyebrow shows plainly. I'll suggest to the duke that he send them to the most important people in Matanzas, to the *alcalde*, and ask the history of the original. Can you, of whom people know nothing, hold up your head and lie down such proof?"

Her gesture silenced him; it was desperate. Her eyes were frantic.

"Very well. We have finished."

"You don't believe I have the pictures—the letters——?"

"I believe you never neglected an opportunity to steal in all your abominable life. Yes, you can crush me, but, rather than save myself by becoming the sponsor, the confederate, of such a thing as you, I'll sacrifice everything dear to me in my life."

She rang the bell, and Suzanne came in. Her mistress's face was ghastly, and the foreigner was bowing low with a strange smile.

"It may possibly interest you to know that I have an appointment with the Duke of Bracebridge at four to-morrow afternoon," he said.

II

It was four o'clock the next day. Dora had done nothing to save herself. Before leaving the theatre after the evening performance, a note from Boldino had been handed her.

"I give you a last chance. Pay my price, and my lips are dumb," it ran.

His messenger waited. Miss Cawtrey said there was no answer, and tore the letter to pieces before the boy. She did not sleep all night. During the morning, a basket of gardenias came from Bracebridge, and a letter, asking her to sup at the Carlton that night with his sister, Lady Torrance, and a Russian prince. She answered the short, tender letter, saying she could not go, but would see him in her dressing-room after the play.

The intolerable day, of the wet, low-skied variety, spent itself to late afternoon. Dora's face was fever-flushed; she kept moving nervously, and the blood seemed pouring through her body in streams of fire.

"Get me my walking things," she said to Suzanne, as the clock struck four; "I'm going out."

While the most important and terrifying hour of her life was running its course, the wind and tingling rain would be better than the brooding

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quiet of her home. She was soon on the street, veiled, and provided with mackintosh and umbrella. London roared and glistened about her in the rain, but she did not see it. There was a picture before her mind which held her, haunting her, sickening her. She saw Boldino and the Duke of Bracebridge face to face in the crimson library of Gordon House—smiling, oily triumph in the Cuban's eyes; coldness and scorn in her lover's, but with a look there, too, it hurt her to think upon.

Dora walked blindly. London would know to-morrow that her engagement to Bracebridge was broken. Gossip would start, increase, and grow more horrible even than the horrible truth. Boldino would talk everywhere. Her dead life would be galvanized to a revolting reality, and while she might "draw" even more strongly at some less exclusive theatre by reason of salacious curiosity, the homes of the well-ordered, gentle world that she loved would be shut against her forever.

She had walked for a long time before she stopped to notice her surroundings. When she pushed up her veil, and looked about her like one awakening, she saw she had come miles. From Berkeley Square to Soho is a far cry, and it was in one of the unsavory streets of that un-English district that she stood. The place was familiar, though she had not seen it in years. Her gaze drank in the sordid details of it, while dark recollections crowded upon her. But there was a more loathsome neighborhood, even more familiar, and toward that, with a grimness stealing over her face, she now moved.

In the days when Dickens wrote, the Seven Dials was a menace to the prosperous traveler, even in the daylight. Now, by reason of broader streets, one may venture there before the night falls. But, even to-day, a walk through that slum, which edges upon the prosperity of western London, weighs down the heart and imagination with crushing hopelessness.

Dora gazed about with shrinking eyes—at the filth, the mud, the carts with bad fish and wilting vegetables, the many women going in and out the public-houses, whose rotting skirts and shawls alone evidenced their sex; at the shrewd-eyed, diseased, accursed children who clung to them or lay encrusted in dirt on bosoms that were cynicisms of motherhood; at the pallid, undersized, ferret-faced men idling in doorways, and waiting for the night as a harvest-time.

At the corner of Shaftsbury avenue and Endell street, she paused, shuddered, yet turned the corner, and half-way down the awful street, walked more slowly, her eyes upon one house not more conspicuously polluted than its companions. A bare-headed woman leered and swayed in the doorway, her bruised mouth twisted into a laugh as she looked at Dora making her way among the litterings on the pavement.

"There's a toff for you!" she cried, in a quick fury, aiming a bottle at her, which flew wide of the mark. "Wot right's she 'ere a-mockin' of respectable people? Oo's she, oi'd loike to know, with her ambaril an' 'er sating petticut? Maybe there's others as could 'ave sating petticuts if they wuz——"

Dora shut her ears to the rest, for the fetid abuse was taken up along the doorways and windows of the street. She turned into Great Earl street, and came out again on Shaftsbury avenue. She was sobbing so uncontrollably that she had to draw her veil down. But something made her pause; the tears seemed to freeze on her cheeks, the sobs to hide in her heart. She gazed with intimate comprehension at a sight familiar enough to the people passing indifferently.

A small girl stood before the window of a fried fish-shop. The stupid and unimaginative would have laughed at her, she was so whimsically dreadful. Eight years of age, perhaps, but the wisdom of fifty dark years flickered evilly from beneath her red lids. Her rags might have been put on in a Mephistophelian humor, for the

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point of the colorless, rotting shawl trailed behind her in the mud; the wreck of a man's boots was on her feet; on her dry hair, gray with dust, and elaborately frizzed, there was a woman's hat on which the bare spine of a deceased plume stood straight; and a dotted veil covered her face, with holes large enough to make doorways for every feature.

As Dora bent over her, the small creature looked up. A dull antagonism came into her leaden eyes.

"Come with me. I'll give you something very nice to eat," Dora said, in a pleading, breathless way. There was a desperate brightness in her face.

"Garn!" The child drew back, sullenly.

"Are you afraid of me?"

"Yus."

"Why are you?"

"'Cos."

"I know," Dora said, suddenly, with a heavy sigh; "you think I'm from the church school."

"Yus. I don't goes 'long o' thim."

"But I'm not. I'm an actress. Now, will you come?"

"In a theayter?"

"Yes."

The child allowed Dora to take her hand; she even allowed herself to be placed in a cab. Her round, pink-lidded eyes did not leave Dora's face for a second during the drive to the theatre. At last, she spoke.

"Har you the loidy wot heats the live snikes, an' mikes them come out of 'er hear?"

When Dora had to deny this distinction, the child withdrew her gaze, and sank into inertia.

III

THE play was over. Dora went into her dressing-room, and closed the door. She was alone, in the grave-clothes of Juliet, white lily buds woven in her fair hair, which fell to her waist in glistening lengths. She listened to the voices and tread of the scene-shifters pushing the tomb of the Capulets into its nightly limbo. She was waiting for Bracebridge, and for the death of her happiness. When he came at the appointed time, the stricken look she had anticipated upon his face, she was so like the risen dead she had impersonated that a chill rippled over him.

Dora spoke first. The words were like small, cold drops.

"You need not tell me. I know you have seen Boldino. You have heard about me."

His honest eyes were clouded; indeed, there was a look of tears about them, as he laid four photographs upon the table, pictures of a girl Dora had thought dead and out of sight forever.

"It is as true, then, as I felt it must be, with such proof," he said, and looked away from her because it was unbearable. "Why did you make me love you?" he asked, miserably.

"Make you?" Dora faltered.

"By seeming to be what—what you are not."

"I did not lie to you, did I? When you questioned me, I told you my life had been a painful one, a dark one. You took me on faith. There is a jailer called Circumstance. Had I told you what horrors this jailer had locked me with, I should have lost you. I was not brave enough, you see. Besides, I felt bitter — not guilty."

She moved a chair to Bracebridge, and sat down near him.

"There is something Boldino left unsaid. You shall know that."

"If you could say it wasn't true!" Bracebridge prayed, leaning forward. "It seems impossible. Say it isn't true. Make me believe in you, Dora. Nothing else counts."

She moved her head, sadly.

"Though it seems impossible, it is true. How it came to be true, you shall hear." She went to him, and for a moment laid her hands upon his shoulders. "I am going to speak to you, dear, with such honesty as the dying give to those who wait for their last words. I am asking for no mercy because you love me. I am asking only for understanding. Before you

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say good-bye to me to-night, I want you to say, once, that you see how I had no choice, how it had to be."

She began to pace between the long mirror and the couch, while Bracebridge watched her in dumb dismay. She to be the heroine of Boldino's disclosures—she who seemed at this moment to be so much more a spirit than a woman! He looked at the pale, perfect face, the woe of Calvary in the eyes, her softness, piteousness, helplessness. Nature had fashioned her for an infernal hypocrisy—since she was Jenny Green.

"Boldino," Dora commenced, in quiet tones, "knew me in Cuba, knew my life there. You shall hear what it was before that time, and after it. I was born in a London slum. I passed the house to-day. The tipsy woman who flung a bottle after me as I went by was curiously like the woman I called my mother. Whether she was or not I do not know. I was about ten years of age, a dirty, hungry, beaten animal, when I had what might be called my first experience of life. I was begging in a street in Soho. I may have been stealing, too—I do not know. I have a faint memory of sometimes taking things from people and places, and bringing them to my mother; so, possibly, I was plying both my trades, thieving and begging."

Bracebridge had open unbelief on his face. She even smiled at the look.

"It seems hard to take this in. As I stand here, I dare say I might serve as a human evidence of the text that out of evil good may come; or, perhaps, the water-lily born of filth is the simile suggested to you?" she asked, in wild self-mockery. "At any rate, it is true that I was begging in Soho—and, perhaps, stealing—at the age of ten. I remember a stout, dark-eyed man stopping to look at me with such inquiry and sharpness that I took to my heels, fearing arrest. Though he was heavy, he ran, and at last caught me. He was most friendly, and the outcome was my introduction to his wife in a room back of a public bar. I remember him saying to her, 'Look closely. When the dirt is gone, she'll be a beauty.' I have a faint idea that I had not the slightest longing to see my mother. These people, Monsieur and Madame Villeneuve, fed me well. Soon I, and a few other female children, were taken across water to a strange city. There, in Paris, I settled down to a new existence under the espionage of the Villeneuves. For three years, I worked as a servant in their house, except during certain hours, when I, with the rest, was taught stage-dancing. I was thirteen, and large for my age, when I was put into a fancy costume, and placed on the stage at the back of the Villeneuve café to do my 'turn.' After dancing, I was sent among the men at the tables to drink with them, and so prevail upon them to buy more. I hardly recall the details of that experience. Time has very mercifully wiped away their clear memory, but, doubtless, they were in keeping with that environment. My mind was dark, my soul asleep, my eyes looked on vice, unshrinkingly. At thirteen, I could not write my name.

"Among the occasional frequenters of this cheap café, there was one rich man who drank champagne. He was a Cuban, named Tomaso Rica. One night, when it was discovered that I had smallpox, they put me on the Wintry street, wrapped in a blanket, to wait there for the hospital wagon. Rica befriended me. I learned afterward that the nurses in the hospital were lavishly paid by him for watching me and caring for me so that my face should not be scarred. When I was better, he took me to Dieppe, calling me his niece, and there I came slowly back to health. No father could have been kinder. Was it strange that I felt for him, for the first time in my life, a human affection?"

She did not expect an answer, and Bracebridge, sitting motionless, had none to give.

"Rica had me taught privately for a year. Then, he took me to a convent school in Passy. There," she said, in a thrilling voice, "light, intel-

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ligence, seemed to burst into flower slowly within me. I came to look on the world with informed eyes. Christmas and Easter were spent with my guardian. He took me to the opera, the theatres; I had books, pretty clothes, trinkets. We drove in the Bois. I was taught to ride. I was taught to sing. I saw no one else. I never questioned his right to own me, any more than a kitten, that had been almost stoned to death, would question, if it could, the right of whoever might take it in to house it, warm it, save it."

She was silent a moment, then said, without shame, even with a proud defiance:

"Now, you know how I came to go to Cuba with Rica. I was sixteen years of age. I had not a friend in the world but him. In fact, I knew nothing of life save through him. No Eastern girl in a harem could feel more grateful to a master than I did to him. There was not a more willing slave on earth. By this time, I knew the world's difference between right and wrong. The books I had read, plays I had seen, things my schoolmates had said, had by degrees made me aware of moral values; but the realization was dull and indifferent. All of my early life, and the fatality which had led me into Rica's power while I was still a sleeping soul, robbed the knowledge of the force it would have had in the mind of a girl who had developed from the beginning under ordinary influences, in the normal way. I began to see it would have been better if I could have been like the other girls, who watched me with a shrinking curiosity as I rode or drove or walked with Rica. But I could not help being what I was, and I did not hope to be anything else. Besides, Rica, in reality a bad man, represented all the kindness I had personally known. These things are comparative."

She paused, then asked, with sudden pleading: "Do you understand at all?"

Bracebridge had covered his eyes with his fingers.

"It is terrible," he said.

"Ah, you see the hideousness of it, but you do not understand," she answered, desperately. "But wait. You must see—you must acquit me."

There were tears and passion in her voice when, after a moment, she resumed the story:

"How did I come at last to feel a haunting horror of myself in that beautiful, Cuban *casa*, where all was luxury, roses, sunshine? Not suddenly; not in a moment, nor an hour, nor a day. But, by degrees, I came to regard myself from a viewpoint that had been impossible before. As usual, with a woman, it was love, a pure, impulsive love, which brought self-knowledge.

"An English boy came to live in Matanzas. His mother had married the French consul there. We two, neither of us twenty, loved with a pure idealism for a little while, as Héloïse and Abélard loved. But, young though he was, he knew what I had not yet divined—the everlasting quality of the taint upon me—that I *must* drown, because, as a moral pariah, the world's opinion was a stone to drag me down, though I might try to rise, and pray, and try, and pray—and *pray!*" she cried, bitterly. "He talked of it to me frankly, and grieved that he could not marry me.

"Rica came upon us one early morning as we met secretly by the fountain in the cathedral garden. After that, his jealousy made him cruel. He told me then, for the first time, the truth about myself. Oh, he said some things to be remembered till I die. The English boy's mother told me the truth, too, as cuttingly as only some good women can, and then sent her son with a tutor on travels to the other end of the earth, just to keep him from such an evil as I. From the priest to whom I stole in my new agony, I also heard the truth, gently, sorrowfully, but in words that made me shudder at the thought of death. Yes, at last I knew to the utmost limit what I was. When I knew, I renounced that self with loathing, forever.

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"You heard from Boldino how I let it appear that I had been drowned. I made my escape that way. I knew that only a belief in my death would prevent Rica from searching for me. I did not go penniless. I knew too well to what dire distress poverty can cast a soul and body. I took enough money to keep me in humble independence for a few years, while I made myself ready for a future that was to bear no finger-marks of my other life. I hid in New York and other large cities. I became a toiler. I made no friends. I was considered cold, severe, puritanical, by those I worked among—I, Jenny Green.

"My one delight at this time was the theatre. I used to sit in cheap seats, night after night, watching and studying. I felt that my chance lay there. I felt my fitness for it. I knew, with a sort of clairvoyance, I should succeed. When I reached London, I had forty pounds as capital. You know my small beginning on the stage—how I was noticed, better parts given me by degrees; you know the story of my success." She faced him squarely. "What have you to say?"

Bracebridge looked up at her. His eyes held a shuddering pity.

"Poor girl! how sorry I am for you!"

"Sorry?" her eyes were like fire in her white face; "sorry? Then you don't understand—not even now!"

She laid her hand on the knob of a door hidden by a curtain, and pushed it back.

"Come," she said, kindly, looking into the room, and holding out her hand.

Bracebridge had risen in wonder. The child from the Seven Dials stepped out. In every particular, she was as Dora had found her, except that she looked sleepy. She winked in the light, like a homeless cat, and chewed the end of her ragged veil. Dora stood behind her, her hands upon the hunched shoulders. In her white robes, lily-crowned, her eyes alight, she was like a pleading angel.

"I came upon this child to-day," she said, slowly; "myself at ten—myself—except that I was even more malignantly marked, for I had beauty. Her name is Annie Mangin, mine was Jenny Green, both sodden, sleeping souls. I did not select, and, when I awoke, I was among the lost. Was that to my discredit? She does not select, and, when she awakens, she will find that I have saved her. Will that be to her credit? Oh, don't you see? don't you see?" She moved nearer to Bracebridge, and broke into sharp sobbing as she fell weakly to her knees. "Broken weeds in the stream — that's all — that's all!"

Dora's controlled pain had its way with her here. She became helpless, and wept as women do above a grave. After a little, she felt a touch upon her hair. She looked up. The child was not in the room. Bracebridge was bending over her, the look she had prayed for upon his face—not pity only, but comprehension and acquittal.

"Always look back upon your memory of me as you look now," she sobbed, and pressed her cheek against his hand.

He lifted her, tenderly.

"Dearest, it will not be good-bye."

She clung to him, murmuring, "Oh, is it true? is it true?"

"How well I understand—and even more than you have asked for. Yes, it was unquenchable purity which made you leave Cuba as you did; and it was honesty which kept you from telling me some lying story of yourself when I asked you to marry me; and it was honor which made you refuse Boldino's bargain, though it seemed to mean losing all——"

"Boldino!" she said, terror in her eyes as she drew back, searching his face; "we forgot Boldino!"

"Quite," said Bracebridge.

"But don't you see? He'll spread the story——"

"I forgot to mention that he is dead," said Bracebridge. "You see, he wouldn't give up those photographs for money. I tried to get them by force. He pulled out a pistol. My

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man rushed in, got him by the neck from behind, the pistol went off, the bullet through his eye——"

"Dead?" Dora whispered.

"Dropped in a wink," said Bracebridge.

"And you didn't speak of it?" she faltered.

Bracebridge kissed her wet face.

"Ah, dear," he said, "I was so miserable at first, and then so happy afterward, I couldn't think of details."

"SHE'S ALL THE WORLD TO ME"

"MY ideal man," said Nancy,
"Is one of power; a knight
Of strong right arm I'd fancy—
Far reaching in his might."

"Behold this arm," I vaunted.
"'Twould reach round all the world!"
"I'd like to see," she taunted,
With lip disdainful curled.

I put my arm about her
Ere she had time to flee.
"'Tis thus 'tis done, fair doubter—
You're all the world—to me!"

TRUMAN ROBERTS ANDREWS.

HIS EXCUSE

"YOU can't go inside," said the door-keeper of the village theatre, wherein a certain "Uncle Tom's Cabin" aggregation were holding forth. "You are drunk."

"Zrunk?" echoed the applicant for admission, who was lavishly and luridly lighted up inside. "Coursh I'm—hic—zrunk! Why—goodgosh'lmighty!—do you s'pose I'd—hic—wanta see your darned old show if I wasn't—hic—zrunk?"

A CLEAR FIELD

CHARLIE—So, your mother sees harm in kissing?
DOLLY—Yes, but mama has gone out.

EVERY OPPORTUNITY

MADGE—Did you give him a chance to kiss you?
MARJORIE—Why, yes. Didn't I tell him he couldn't?

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LA GRIFFE DE LION

Par François Coppée

LE lieutenant de vaisseau Julien de Rhé était revenu dans un triste état de sa station en Cochinchine; et lorsqu'après trois longs mois de maladie dans la maison familiale, en Touraine, il entra en convalescence et put faire les cent pas sur la terrasse au bord de la Loire, entre sa mère et sa sœur,—avec quel amour elles l'avaient soigné, les chères femmes!—le jeune homme éprouvait souvent encore, au souffle déjà froid de l'automne, des frissons assez inquiétants.

— Allez passer le gros de l'hiver à Pau, conseilla le médecin... Climat doux, pas trop chaud, calmant et sédatif par excellence... C'est ce qui vous convient... et vous reviendrez dans trois mois chez madame votre mère, tout à fait grand garçon.

C'est pourquoi, vers la mi-novembre, accoudé à sa fenêtre ensoleillée de l'hôtel Gardères, Julien de Rhé contemplait le sublime panorama des Pyrénées et fumait les délicieuses cigarettes du convalescent, si âpres au goût renouvelé, qui lui rappelaient celles qu'il avait jadis grillées en cachette, dans l'entrepont du *Borda*, et qui lui rendaient les sensations de la seizième année.

— Tiens, tiens, tiens!... ce Pau... mais c'est plein de jolies femmes, remarqua le jeune homme, la première fois qu'il alla écouter la musique militaire sur la place Royale et flâner au soleil devant la statue, en style troubadour, du bon roi Henri; et, bien qu'il ne fût ni un libertin, ni un fat, le marin, repris d'un bel appétit de la vie, mit sa casquette d'uniforme n° 1 et sa redingote aux trois galons d'or neufs, où brillait cette rosette de la Légion d'honneur que sa mère lui avait posée sur son lit, quand il était si malade, et qu'il avait bien cru ne porter qu'une fois, sur le drap noir de son cercueil.

Comme il avait bien fait de venir à Pau, tout de même! C'était exquis, ce doux soleil qui chauffe sans brûler, ce bel azur, ce vaste paysage, ce lointain amphithéâtre de collines, et, tout là-bas, ces cimes de neige dans le ciel! C'était amusant comme tout de circuler dans la foule cosmopolite, parmi les belles étrangères, et d'entendre leurs voix parler toutes les langues de l'Europe et se confondre comme les divers chants des oiseaux dans une volière. Sans doute, il y avait bien quelques rencontres affligeantes, comme celle de ce jeune Anglais, phtisique au dernier degré, qu'un domestique poussait dans une petite voiture, enseveli sous les plaids et sous les cache-nez, avec des yeux de poisson cuit et un respiratoire de taffetas noir sur la bouche. Ah! cela donnait froid dans les os; mais, après le premier mouvement de pitié—l'homme est si égoïste!—Julien songeait que, lui aussi, faisait peur à voir, quand il avait débarqué à Toulon, maigre comme un squelette, deux ronds de chocolat sous les yeux; et qu'il était bien guéri, maintenant, et qu'il revenait de loin.

Et, respirant l'air tiède à pleins poumons, frémissant de bien-être, la caresse du soleil dans le dos, en toilette soignée, rasé de frais, fier de sa rosette neuve, Julien de Rhé se sentait heureux d'être au monde, donnait des pièces blanches aux mendiants,

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attardait son regard sur celui des jolies femmes croisées au passage, et s'arrêtait tout attendri devant les robustes petites filles américaines,—bas et gants noirs et robes blanches envolées,—qui dansaient en rond autour d'un arbre de la place Royale, au rythme du pas redoublé joué par la musique du régiment.

Quelles bonnes dispositions pour devenir amoureux, n'est-ce pas? Aussi l'heureux convalescent reçut-il le coup de foudre, le jour où il vit Mlle Olga Babarine, la plus belle fille de la colonie russe, descendre de cheval devant l'hôtel Gassion, où elle demeurait avec sa mère.

Il était cinq heures du soir environ et elle revenait de la chasse au renard. Les cinq ou six adorateurs en habits rouges qui l'accompagnaient avaient mis bien vite pied à terre et s'étaient bousculés à qui lui tiendrait l'étrier. Elle s'était laissée glisser dans les bras du premier arrivé, et tout de suite, frappant du pommeau de sa cravache sur une table de la vérandah, elle avait demandé une tasse de lait, l'avait bue d'une seule lampée, et tout debout, son svelte corps de déesse du Primatice moulé par l'amazone noire, ses folles torsades de cheveux couleur de cuivre s'échappant du chapeau d'homme et répandues sur ses épaules, elle riait, tenant à deux mains sa tasse vide, satisfaite et comme grisée par la boisson fraîche, avec deux moustaches de crème aux coins de la bouche; et le soleil couchant dans sa chevelure allumait autour de son visage une sorte de halo d'or.

Puis, soudain redevenue sérieuse, elle posa la tasse sur la table, fit un léger salut du front, plein de dédain, au groupe d'habits rouges, et rentra dans l'hôtel d'un pas impérial, en fouettant sa jupe avec sa cravache.

Trois jours après, Julien de Rhé, qui avait passé son temps à dire à ses connaissances: "Qui est-ce? J'en suis fou, je l'adore, etc.," était présenté—ce qui n'était pas très difficile—chez ces dames Babarine, et faisait partie du peloton d'amoureux de la belle Russe.

Etait-elle Russe, après tout, cette capiteuse créature, qui, depuis le commencement de la saison, galopait toute la journée et valsait toute la nuit? Oui, par son père putatif, par le premier mari de sa mère, le comte Babarine. Mais tout le monde savait fort bien que la mère avait précisément divorcé au moment de la naissance de sa fille et que Mme Babarine, qui d'ailleurs avait pour père un banquier de New-York, nommé Jacobson, avait entretenu de tout temps une liaison presque publique avec un prince royal du Nord—un Christian ou un Oscar quelconque—liaison dont Olga était probablement née. Avait-elle une nationalité, cette enfant qui avait été élevée à bâtons rompus dans un *nursery* d'Ecosse, dans un couvent de Naples, dans un pensionnat mômier de Genève, qui avait dormi le tiers de ses nuits sur les coussins des express, et qui ne voyait passer dans ses souvenirs, comme dans un stéréoscope, que les villes d'eaux, bains de mer, stations hivernales et autres lieux de rendez-vous élégants, où sa mère—une belle personne encore, malgré la couperose—promenait depuis quinze ans son ennui de coquette sur le retour, son samowar et ses ouistitis? Hélas! elle n'avait pas de patrie, l'étrange fille, qui, à côté de pudeurs de vierge, avait des hardiesses de garçon et qui disait, en se moquant d'elle-même:

— Moi, je ne suis ni de Londres, ni de Paris, ni de Vienne, ni de Saint-Pétersbourg... Je suis de table d'hôte.

Avait-elle une famille? Pas davantage. Son véritable père—l'Oscar ou le Christian auquel Mme Babarine ne cessait de faire allusion,—était mort depuis plusieurs années, et quant au comte russe, son père selon la loi, il ne s'occupait jamais d'elle. Ruiné de fond en comble, il n'avait d'autre moyen d'existence que son coup de fusil infaillible et il vivait en gagnant tous les prix des tirs aux pigeons, comme une sorte de Bas-de-Cuir civilisé. Quant à la comtesse, malgré de périodiques attendrissements ma-

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ternels qui donnaient sur les nerfs à tout le monde tant ils sonnaient faux, elle était douée d'un de ces égoïsmes parfaits, absolus, sphériques, qu'on ne trouve jamais en défaut, et, pendant une fièvre typhoïde dont Olga avait failli mourir à huit ans, Mme Babarine n'avait pas oublié une seule fois—tout en veillant sa petite fille, par respect humain,—de mettre ses gants gras pour la nuit, qui lui conservaient les mains si blanches.

Julien de Rhé apprit toutes ces choses lorsqu'il se fut enrôlé dans l'escadron volant de Sigisbés qui manœuvrait sans cesse autour de Mlle Olga Babarine, et il se mit à aimer éperdument la singulière et troublante fille, qui se laissait regarder dans les yeux, et qui, le jour où un ami commun lui présenta le lieutenant de vaisseau, lui dit en allumant une cigarette de phéresli:

— Ah! c'est vous qui êtes si amoureux de moi?... Bonjour, monsieur.

Puis elle lui donna une solide poignée de main, comme un homme.

Il se mit à l'aimer, l'honnête et brave marin, à l'aimer d'autant plus qu'il ne tarda pas à la comprendre et à la plaindre. Car il ne s'y trompa pas; Olga était fantasque, mal élevée, mais sans coquetterie, et son âme était fière et franche. Qui sait? Peut-être sentait-elle toute la vanité de sa vie d'agitations et de plaisirs? Le certain, c'est qu'elle jugeait, et sévèrement, ces jeunes gens qui caracolaient auprès d'elle à la chasse au renard et qui se faisaient inscrire chaque soir sur son carnet de bal. Tous la désiraient, aucun ne l'estimait, car nul d'entre eux ne s'était encore décidé à la demander en mariage. Aussi les traitait-elle durement, et les rappelait-elle au respect,—d'un rude coup de caveçon, la belle écuyère,—s'ils s'avisaient de lui parler de trop près dans le cou, pendant le tourbillon d'une valse, ou de presser trop longtemps la main qu'elle leur tendait en camarade.

Julien, à qui la délicatesse de son cœur donnait de la pénétration d'esprit—allez, ce sont souvent les naïfs qui voient le plus juste—découvrit le secret trésor de loyauté qu'il y avait dans cette fille de race, au fond si malheureuse. Sans doute, il l'aimait pour sa beauté, et la tête lui tournait, quand, dans une halte de danse, il la sentait s'appuyer sur son bras, dans sa splendeur de rousse aux yeux noirs, au teint de rose après l'orage, lui parlant avec abandon et l'enivrant de ses yeux d'étoile et de son haleine de violette. Mais il l'aimait aussi, il l'aimait surtout pour ses peines si orgueilleusement cachées; et il avait un cruel serrement de cœur en surprenant le regard sombre, le regard douloureux d'Olga sur sa mère, quand Mme Babarine, à son thé de quatre à six,—assise à contre-jour pour dissimuler ses points noirs aux ailes du nez, vainement combattus par l'anti-bolbos,—évoquait, à mots aussi peu couverts que possible, ses royales conquêtes dans les cours du Nord.

L'épouser! Oui, l'enlever de ce milieu plein de périls, l'emporter chez sa mère, à lui, qui était une sainte femme, lui faire respirer la fortifiante et pure atmosphere d'une vraie famille, la sauver en un mot! Il y songeait, il ne songeait plus qu'à cela! Il croyait même parfois qu'Olga avait deviné son désir, et, lorsqu'à ces "quatre à six" de Mme Babarine, où Olga traitait tous ses adorateurs avec sa franchise garçonnière, elle présentait au marin le verre de thé à la russe, il voyait au fond des yeux de la jeune fille comme une douce et lointaine lumière, qui semblait répondre à sa pitié généreuse et à sa tendresse infinie.

— Oui, mademoiselle, mon congé de convalescence expire dans huit jours. Je quitterai Pau demain, j'irai passer quelques jours en Touraine auprès de ma sœur, puis de là, je repartirai pour Brest, comme aide de camp du préfet maritime, et dans un an, dix-huit mois, je reprendrai la mer.

Ils étaient seuls dans un coin du salon de lecture de l'hôtel, debout près d'une fenêtre ouverte, devant le ciel de la nuit, où palpitaient des milliers d'étoiles.

— Adieu donc et bon voyage, ré-

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pondit Olga de sa voix franche et ferme. Mais j'ai quelque chose à vous demander, monsieur de Rhé... Oui, cette griffe de lion montée sur un petit cercle d'or, que vous portez en breloque... Eh bien, j'en ai envie... Cela vient d'un lion que vous avez tué dans une chasse, autrefois, en Afrique, n'est-ce pas?... Je suis une espèce de fauve, moi... Ce bibelot-là me convient... Donnez-le-moi; je le garderai en souvenir de vous.

Julien détacha la petite breloque et la mit dans la main de la jeune fille; mais soudain il prit cette main entre les siennes, et tout bas, ardemment:

— Je vous aime! lui dit-il. Voulez-vous devenir ma femme?

Olga dégagea doucement sa main, en gardant la griffe de lion; puis, croisant ses bras sur sa poitrine, elle regarda pendant un long moment M. de Rhé bien en face, sans émotion apparente.

— Non, dit-elle enfin, non!... Et pourtant vous êtes le premier qui m'aimez et qui me le dites de cette bonne façon-là. Mais c'est pour cela que je refuse...

— Olga! s'écria Julien d'une voix altérée.

— Ecoutez-moi, reprit-elle en l'interrompant d'un geste, et comprenez bien pourquoi je vous dis non... C'est que je ne me sens pas digne de vous et que je vous rendrais malheureux... Vous savez bien, cette lettre de votre sœur que vous vous plaigniez d'avoir perdue... Eh bien, c'est ici que vous l'avez laissée tomber, et je l'ai ramassée, et je l'ai lue... Votre sœur répondait à la confidence que vous lui aviez faite de vos sentiments pour moi... sentiments que j'ai devinés depuis longtemps... Elle s'en réjouissait en simple et vertueuse enfant qu'elle est, mais dans des termes qui m'ont fait comprendre quelle profonde, quelle effrayante différence existe entre une véritable jeune fille et moi!... En lisant cette lettre, pleine de détails intimes et touchants, j'ai vu aussi ce qu'était votre famille, vieille maison d'honnêtes gens, où vous ne devez faire entrer qu'une honnête femme... Bénissez Dieu, monsieur de Rhé, d'avoir une mère en cheveux gris à qui vous ne pouvez penser sans sentir quelque chose de délicieusement doux qui se fond dans votre cœur... Moi aussi, j'ai une mère, moi aussi!... mais j'ai été forcée de la juger... Vous n'avez vu que ses ridicules, monsieur, mais je la connais mieux... Si vous lui demandiez ma main, elle vous la refuserait, parce que vous êtes de petite noblesse et que votre fortune est médiocre... Ma mère a décidé que je ne ferais qu'un grand mariage, ou sinon... sinon, elle me trouvera autre chose... Hein? j'ai de l'expérience, pour une fille de dix-neuf ans!... C'est horrible, n'est-ce pas? Mais c'est ainsi... Voilà pourquoi nous étions l'hiver dernier à Nice, l'été dernier à Scheweningue, et pourquoi nous sommes maintenant à Pau! Voilà pourquoi nous roulons comme des colis d'un bout à l'autre de l'Europe, pourquoi nous ne couchons que dans les lits d'auberge et ne mangeons qu'à la table d'hôte. Ma mère a été presque princesse royale, vous comprenez, et elle m'a fait entendre dès l'âge de quinze ans que j'étais destinée à être au moins archiduchesse, fût-ce de la main gauche... Un mariage avec un petit gentilhomme, presque un bourgeois!... A ses yeux, je dérogerais. Ah! je dois vous inspirer le dégoût, et je me fais honte à moi-même! Ne protestez pas... Non, vous ne voudriez pas amener devant votre mère, comme votre fiancée, comme votre femme, celle à qui l'on a mis tant de boue dans le cœur... Et puis, je ne suis qu'un objet de luxe, coûteux et inutile, dont vous n'avez pas besoin, qui ne vous donnerait pas de bonheur... D'ailleurs, je ne vous aime point, je n'aime personne... L'amour, c'est dans les choses qu'on m'a défendues... Adieu, monsieur de Rhé, levez-vous et allez-vous-en sans me dire un mot je vous en conjure... Seulement, vous me laissez votre griffe de lion, n'est-ce pas? Elle me rappellera un honnête garçon envers qui j'ai agi en honnête fille... Ne me dites plus rien et quittons-nous pour toujours... Adieu.

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Trois ans après, le transport à vapeur le *Du Couëdic*, revenant du Sénégal, venait de faire escale aux Canaries, pour prendre le courrier, et continuait son chemin, par une nuit de gros temps, lorsque le vaguemestre entra dans le carré des officiers et déposa sur la table un paquet de journaux.

Julien de Rhé déploya une feuille d'informations, venant de Paris et vieille de près de trois semaines, et il y lut, sous la rubrique: *Déplacements et villégiatures*, les lignes suivantes:

"S. M. le roi de Souabe, qui voyage, comme on le sait, dans le plus strict incognito, sous le nom de comte d'Augsbourg, est depuis hier soir dans nos murs.

"Un fâcheux incident s'est produit à la gare, au moment de l'arrivée du roi. La baronne de Hall qui, seulement accompagnée de sa mère, la comtesse Babarine, avait fait le voyage avec Sa Majesté, a perdu un bijou de peu de valeur, mais auquel Mme de Hall attache, paraît-il, le plus grand prix. C'est une simple griffe de lion, montée sur un petit cercle d'or.

"Mme de Hall a promis deux mille francs de récompense à la personne qui lui rapporterait cet objet."

— Julien, prenez garde... Vous allez oublier l'heure de votre quart, mon cher ami.

— Merci, dit Julien de Rhé en jetant le journal et comme sortant d'un rêve.

Cette nuit-là, le timonier, qui était seul sur la passerelle avec l'officier de quart, vit celui-ci porter son mouchoir à son visage à plusieurs reprises, et pourtant, quoiqu'il y eût beaucoup de vent et de houle, l'embrun n'arrivait pas jusque-là.

IN THE GARDEN

"*And he bought him a garden for his school.*"—*The Epicureana.*

IN the garden of my soul
Flowered the weeds of yesterday;
Broken faith and bitter dole,
Hope that hath not won the goal,
Flowered and faded slow away.

Ah! but in the soil beneath
Lie their scattered seeds to-day—
Shall they, bursting from the sheath
Like the fruit of dragons' teeth,
Flower and die and flower for aye?

In the garden of my soul
Bloomed the flowers of yesterday;
Joys that gladden and console,
Love with beauty's aureole,
Fade ye, too, in twilight gray?

Come, thou gardener, bent and wise,
Gird thee with exultant might;
Pluck the weed ere yet it dies,
Tend and trim the flowers I prize,
Wreathe me garlands for the night.

DUFFIELD OSBORNE.

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A WHISPERED WORD

DULL silence and a drear December day;
Autumn's sweet dreams all covered with dry leaves;
One lonely hawk on high the still air cleaves;
The earth lies listless as my heart, and gray
As the dead hopes that were so fair in May.
Friends, nothing more, we watch the soaring bird.
But, oh, you turn to me! You speak one word—
Which I had never thought to hear you say.

It moves the silence, as a stone the lake,
Until upon the farthest shores of space
The rippling waves of gladness roll and break!
One word! ah, God, it changes nature's face,
The air is thrilled with meaning, earth's a-flame!
Such magic in one word, one word—my name!

VENITA SEIBERT.

JUST SO

"HE has married and gone to live with his wife's parents."

"Ah, I see! By securing a better half, he has made sure of better quarters."

"IN 1901, I read all the noted books of that year, and it took me just three months."

"A week ago, I read the books of the same year that are still noted, and it took me just ten minutes."

BOUND TO BE

"HE is a confirmed woman-hater, isn't he?"

"Sure! Been married three times."

LOVE may laugh at the locksmith, but never at the grocer.

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THE BURGLAR

(A MORAL TALE)

By Rose K. Weekes

MISS MIRABELLE FANEAU, known in private life as Dolly Fane, fitted her latch-key into the door of her flat at eleven o'clock one cold December evening, and entered the hall. She was home unusually early, because an alarm of fire had interrupted the performance of the piece in which she was playing. Dolly was an actress; but, unlike most actresses, she studied economy. For this reason, she lived in a cheap flat in an unfashionable neighborhood, and dispensed with a maid; for this reason, also, she stumbled into a small snow-drift in the hall, the donation of a leaky skylight. When she had lighted the gas, and recovered her temper, she went into her bedroom to smooth her chestnut hair.

Not only did her commodious suite of apartments include a spacious hall, a cozy bed-chamber and the usual offices, but it had an elegant drawing-room as well. There Dolly dined; there she kept her savings; and she was naturally somewhat perturbed when the door, which she had just seen closed, gave a sudden and violent groan. Dolly put down her brush, and stepped out into the hall. The door stood ajar. A pleasurable thrill went over her; it was true that such mysterious portents had occurred before, and were to be ascribed to the shortcomings of the builder, but still there might be a burglar concealed behind the portal. Dolly decided that it was her duty to be nervous, and flung the door wide.

A young man was kneeling before the fire.

He looked at Dolly, and Dolly looked at him. Miss Fane experienced a peculiar sensation, which was certainly not terror; it was perilously like exhilaration. The burglar remained motionless. Dolly felt bound to act; she advanced into the room, and herself broke the silence.

"To what do I owe the honor of this intrusion?"

"Madame, to the coldness of the night," said the stranger, rising to his feet. He laid a revolver on the table, and then continued: "I escaped from the prison-van yesterday on my way to jail, and I have been hiding among the chimney-pots on your roof most of the time since. I thought you would not be home till late, so I climbed in by the skylight, and I have kept up your fire."

"How did you know my habits?" asked Dolly, warily, with her hand on the electric bell.

"Because I once had a flat here myself, and I remembered you."

"What were you accused of?"

"Forgery."

"I suppose you were innocent?"

"No, unfortunately," said the stranger; "I was guilty."

"Were you really?" said Dolly, and she took her hand off the bell, and came further into the room. The burglar was a personable young man, and had the address of a gentleman; his eyes were seductively blue, and he certainly looked chilly. Such considerations should not have influenced a right-minded young lady, but Dolly was, unfortunately, not that. "Sit down, please; if you came to get warm,

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you may as well do so. Am I to take charge of this revolver?"

"As a guarantee of my harmless intentions," responded the burglar, sinking down among the cushions with an air of well-being.

"I know how to use it," said Dolly, with satisfaction.

"I thought you looked as though you did; you are evidently a young lady of character."

"I'm a very fair shot." Dolly leveled it correctly at the stranger's head. "I could certainly shoot you dead, if I chose."

"Do, if you like," said the stranger, politely; "only, pray let it not be by accident."

"Don't talk nonsense, please," said Dolly. "What is your name?"

"Henry Maxwell Wodehouse," said the stranger; "but do call me Max. Every one——"

"You were in, you say, for forgery. Had you ever forged before?"

"Never; it was my first offense. My uncle's Lord Colchester; haven't you seen the case in the papers?"

"I missed it, I suppose. Why did you forge?"

"I got into debt."

"How?"

"Backing horses," said the stranger, with *sang-froid.*

"What was your sentence?"

"Three years' imprisonment."

"How did you escape?"

"The front wheel came off as the van turned a corner, the driver was pitched off, the warder inside got a crack on the head, a crowd gathered, and I made myself scarce amid the confusion."

"And found your way here?"

"And found my way here," said the stranger. "You see, I knew the ropes."

Dolly had finished her catechism, and was tolerably well satisfied. She had a mighty contempt for crimes done for money's sake and at the behest of circumstances, and, if the burglar had professed himself a martyr, she would at once have rung the bell, and delivered him up to the majesty of the law, which was generally to be found holding converse with the basement. But the burglar's admission of guilt was a passport to her assistance. Dolly's morality was perverted, but it was quite definite; she held Spartan ideas on the subject of picking and stealing. She knew her own mind very well indeed, and was not troubled with diffidences or hesitations.

She laid the table, brought a cold beefsteak pie from the larder, a decanter of wine from the sideboard, and added a serviette as a last refinement. When she passed her writing-table, she actually forgot that her savings were locked up there and that her guest was a thief. He, meanwhile, watched her preparations in silence, and his face was a battleground of emotions.

When she had finished, "Are you going to give me supper?" he exclaimed.

"I am; please sit down."

"I don't want anything, thank you," said he, in a low voice.

"I do," said Dolly. "I am inviting you to share my meal."

"I'd rather go back to the roof."

"Well, you're certainly polite."

"I don't think you're fit to sit down with a forger," he hastened to explain. "At least——"

"Lucid, very," Dolly remarked.

"I mean, a forger isn't fit to sit down with you. You turn all my ideas topsy-turvy, so what can you expect of my words?"

"I commend your scruples," said Dolly, severely, "but I don't respect your sense."

"Well, I haven't any objection, if you haven't," said the guest, and he burst out laughing. "You make me feel quite virtuous."

"That must be a strange sensation."

"It is, rather," he agreed, drawing up his chair; "but it makes me in sympathy with you, so you may be sure it is delightful."

They began their meal. The burglar's conversation was most persuasive, and Dolly was little surprised

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to find that he talked with great fluency and facility on many subjects; but she was surprised to discover that, so far as her experience served her, he was accurate. And he, once he had made up his mind to accept her hospitality, did not look back or forward, but devoted himself to the task of entertaining his hostess with the best of his powers.

The meal over, Dolly cleared the cloth, and carried the used dishes into the kitchen, where she filled a bowl with hot water, rolled her sleeves to her elbows, and began to wash the utensils. The sight of her bared arms, beautiful in their immaculate whiteness and yet so strong, of the wet crockery and of the surging water, roused in her guest a spirit of emulation; and, as she deftly washed, he dried the dishes upon a soft, white cloth. Very awkward was he at the task, moreover.

"Hold the plate in your left hand and the cloth in your right, rubbing under and over, so," said Dolly, taking it from his fingers to illustrate her meaning; and, as she did so, their hands touched, and the guest looked down at his own as though to see what metamorphosis the contact wrought.

"Where did you learn to be so charmingly clever?" he inquired.

"At home. I was born in a Yorkshire farm-house, and I served for my father and brothers till I was twenty."

"You don't mean to say they let you slave for them! The barbarians!"

"Well, yes, we were barbarians," said Dolly, rubbing away at her fork. "Many's the time we've gone poaching together; that's where I learned to handle a gun. And many's the clout on the ear I've had, like Alfred, for letting the cakes burn, when I was reading. Women are women with us, not dolls in glass cases. My hands will show that I've worked."

She extended a rosy, soft palm, crinkled and puffed by the hot water. There was but one thing for the stranger to do, according to his lights, and he did it, gallantly. There was but one thing for Dolly to do, according to hers, and she also performed her duty; adding, succinctly, "Don't be a fool!"

"But why, if you enjoyed having your ears boxed, did you ever leave your native dales?" asked the stranger, ruefully rubbing his own ears; for Dolly was thorough in all she did.

"I ran away to come to town because I wanted power."

The stranger surveyed her, curiously, and with appreciation. The warmth of her young life enriched the curves of her damask cheeks, her eyes sparkled like brown diamonds, her throat in its full roundness was perfect as that of the Venus of the Louvre. Her vital beauty glowed like a jewel in the shabby room. "And have you found it?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"How do you mean to win it?"

"By money, and beauty, and wits," said Dolly, concisely. She stripped off her apron, pulled down her sleeves, and fastened the links at the wrists; and the stranger watched the disappearance of her arms with a regretful sigh.

"Money, beauty, wits; why put them in that impolite order?" he asked, following her into the drawing-room.

"Because it's their order of merit. That is why I live here alone; I am saving my money with a purpose."

"It's a poor look-out for me, if I've only my wits to depend on."

"I dare say you'll do pretty well," said Dolly, just turning her head to give him a patronizing glance, "after you've served your term; for, of course, you will certainly be recaptured. Ambition would be hardly in your line."

"I beg your pardon. I cannot bear to contradict a lady, but I must protest."

"Are you really ambitious?" asked Dolly, now turning completely around. "Then, I think better of you than I did."

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"Did you despise me?"

"Rather. Yours is such a milk-and-watery sort of story."

"Then why did you take me in?"

"Because you told the truth. It was your one merit."

The stranger's lips parted eagerly to speak, and shut again in exasperated silence. He looked as though his excuse had suddenly been spirited away from his tongue.

"You are certainly less commonplace than I thought," Dolly pursued, "since you are ambitious. But your ambition couldn't have been worth much, since you threw away your chances for a paltry bet."

"You appear to consider that ambition is the cardinal virtue!"

"Not in the least; only that weakness is the cardinal sin."

"I'm sure I wish I'd never heard of my wretched uncle!" groaned the culprit, with evident sincerity. "I wish I'd never saddled myself with that forgery!"

"You do? That makes your case all the worse.

"'Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it may.'

You should count the cost, and make up your mind first; not abandon your resolve for the first scruple or terror. I do despise a wavering purpose."

"But hang it all! I was committing a crime!"

"Oh, a crime will do

"'As well, I reply, to serve for a test,'"

quoted Dolly. "I'd far rather be a whole-hearted sinner than a half-hearted saint."

The stranger passed his hand wearily across his brow. "And what about repentance?"

"Repentance," said Dolly, "is most often a lively sense of judgment to come. I prefer steadfastness, myself."

"Then you'd advise me to stick to my purpose, whatever it be, through thick and thin?"

"Certainly I do."

"Very well. I don't know where your immoral morality will lead me," said the stranger. "On your head be it if I take your advice."

"Do, and I'll change my opinion of you!"

"You still think me contemptible?"

"On your own confession, you've not been steadfast, hitherto."

The stranger gave her another glance, compounded of chagrin, frustration and unwilling amusement.

"I'll explain all that some day," he said, deprecatingly.

"Perhaps you did it to screen a friend!" suggested Dolly, with such kind solicitude that she drove her guest almost to profanity. He got up out of his chair.

"I think I'll wish you good night, Miss Fane, and go back to the roof."

"You may wish me good night, but you won't go back to the roof."

"Are you going to deliver me up to the police?"

"After sharing a meal with you? What strange ideas of hospitality you civilized Londoners have! In Yorkshire, the barbarians don't do so. You will sleep in this room. To-morrow, I'll get you some second-hand clothes, and make up your face so that your mother wouldn't know you; then, you may go, but not before."

"You're too kind."

"Not in the least. It's a reward to you for telling the truth."

Her guest writhed afresh, and Dolly wondered what sting lay in her words; but she was not disposed to spare him.

"You know I can't stay here. It's impossible, on your account."

"Scandal? I don't care for it."

"Well, I do; and I won't stay."

"Then I shall ring for the policeman."

"Do, by all means." Dolly put her hand on the bell. "Oh, no, by Jove! I simply can't stand that. Don't ring. I'll stay."

The hapless burglar again swept his hand across his perturbed brow. Dolly took her hand away. She had not meant to ring; she had merely given him a chance of vindicating his character. This was too much.

"You may sleep on the sofa," she

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said, her voice edged with righteous contempt. "I don't know whether you expect me to believe in the strength of your character *still?*"

"I'll explain—" cried the stranger, but he was explaining to the air. Dolly had gone, and had locked the door behind her. The stranger stood and gazed at that noble deal portal until a slow smile dawned, and he went thoughtfully back to his chair.

"After all," he said, "this will teach her a moral lesson."

Dolly rose, as usual, next morning at seven, lighted her kitchen fire, and cooked the breakfast. She did not sweep the dining-room, having a natural delicacy about disturbing her guest; but, punctually, when the clock struck half-past eight, she knocked at the door, at first formally, then vigorously. She got no answer. Dolly marveled at the soundness of his slumber, fetched the kitchen poker, and raised a lively tattoo which chipped the paint off the panels, but elicited no answering voice. The mistress of the flat, who wanted her breakfast, then unlocked the door, and went boldly in.

The room was empty.

Dolly came near to dropping the breakfast-tray. Where and how had he gone? She ran to the window, and looked down seven stories into the street, but no mangled corpse decorated the area railings; and Dolly felt sure that, even though she had misjudged him in this last instance, he was not sufficiently angelic to receive a miraculous gift of wings. She turned back, and saw, prominently set on the table, a note addressed to herself. It was written on her note-paper, which she kept locked in her escritoire; yet, even then, she had no suspicion of the truth.

DEAR MISS FANE:

I am not a forger. I never escaped from a prison-van. I have no uncle, except that one who is a little less than kin and more than kind. I have by now sojourned on your roof, it is true, though I had never done so when first we met. But it is true that—till to-day—I had a flat in this house; and, though you may not have noticed me, I have long noticed and admired you, especially your economy. I am a gentleman of shady antecedents and yet blacker debts, and I took advantage of your absent evening to make a burglarious entry into your flat with a false key, on purpose to relieve you of your savings. You caught me red-handed. I invented a story which, I calculated, would incline you to mercy. It did so; you were angelic. Alas! I weakly repented of my purpose; the reason, your mirror will tell you plainly, if such a word may be used in such a context. But you have shown me my duty. "A crime will do as well, I reply, to serve for a text." To vindicate my character, I regret to say that I have been forced to break open your cash-box and appropriate its contents. I know you will not think me ungrateful; reluctant though I was, what could I do but follow your counsel? You will rejoice to know that I am not vacillating, for weakness is, is it not, the cardinal sin?

The Honorable Henry Maxwell Wodehouse is, I believe, Clerk to the House of Commons. It is really a pity that you do not read the papers.

Will you prosecute me when I come back?

THE COMPANY HE KEEPS

NODD—What explanation are you going to make to your wife?
TODD—It won't be necessary to make any. She knows I'm with you.

HE—I am almost afraid to make love to you, for fear I don't know how.
SHE—Have no fear! I've taught many a better man than you.

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RONDEL

LOVE hath querulous grown and sad—
We should have parted yesterday;
A wistful lass and a tender lad—
Pity it were we chose to stay.

Over-long was the joy we had—
Why we wearied what man may say?
Love hath querulous grown and sad—
We should have parted yesterday.

Oh, to have said, when hearts were glad,
"Kiss me and go," as lovers may.
Now we sneer that the dream was mad,
Yawn and wonder and turn away.
Love hath querulous grown and sad—
We should have parted yesterday.

HELEN SCOTT.

INGRATITUDE

THE great boss, alone and now forgotten, stood once again in the streets of the metropolis that had been the scene of his endeavors. No one recognized him. No one spoke to him. The crowd passed on, indifferent to his presence.

A tear glistened in his eye. "Well!" he exclaimed, sadly, "I'll never rob another city!"

NOT NECESSARY

FIRST BUNCO MAN—What are you up to? Working some new game?
SECOND BUNCO MAN—Don't have to. None of the old games is played out yet.

FIRST MAN—Isn't that short lady over there your wife?
SECOND MAN—I really can't say—the divorce decision hasn't been given yet.

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THE BLUE THORN OF KASHGAR

By Edward Boltwood

STARTLED by his word of annoyance, Madelon Wroxeter leaned to one side, the better to observe her husband across the narrow circle of damask where the trio sat at dinner. A scarlet lamp beamed dully over the table, and in its light Mrs. Wroxeter's attitude revealed a curving line of perfect beauty between her neck and shoulders. Ellis Drake thought he had been surfeited by the girl's perfections, but he noted the line with shameless eagerness.

"What in the world has happened, David?" said she.

"A sharp corner in the rim of the claret glass, dear." Wroxeter pressed a *serviette* to his mouth. "I nicked my clumsy lip. You have allowed our tableware to suffer during my absence from civilization. 'He who leaves his home unlocked will find his wine running, his dishes broke, his women—' It is an Arabian proverb of great wisdom. I sha'n't finish it."

Drake laughed, readily, but Mrs. Wroxeter's eyebrows drew together in a charming frown.

"*Hélas!* ever your Arabians!" she sighed, in her pretty French-English.

"Jealousy, you see, David," commented Drake, smiling.

Wroxeter nodded, and adjusted his spectacles. Newspaper artists found the famous explorer a poor subject. He was a slight, dark man, with a sparse and grizzled beard. Only at the third or fourth glance might one catch the wiry energy in his grave face.

"Anything so unpleasant as jealousy is out of place here, Madelon," he said, sententiously. "Is it not the night of my home-coming to New York, and to my beautiful young wife, and to my trusted friend? That is an occasion, I fancy. I pledge you." He raised his glass, but set it down untasted. "My lip smarts like fire. In Turkestan, one might be poisoned so."

Drake was courteously interested.

"Oh, a cup with a barb to prick your tongue is a familiar trick," went on Wroxeter. "The blue thorn of Kashgar would have done my business here, swiftly and certainly. In a minute, I'd be twisted and burning on the carpet. I saw a man die of the blue thorn at Fort Yaryn. When he was dead, he was like a black, swollen hoop; he——"

"David!" Mrs. Wroxeter shuddered, appealingly.

"No, it is not a nice anecdote," he admitted. "Quebec pleased you last Autumn, did it not, Ellis? Madelon tells me that you were there while she was revisiting madame, her mother. Now, the tobacco, Mifflin."

Cigars were offered by the old butler, gray in his master's service, and over the boxes Drake hesitated silently before replying. To his relief, however, Mrs. Wroxeter took up the conversation.

Drake leaned back in his chair, amused at her ingenuousness. Apparently, she was as naïve as if she were ignorant of the passion in the heart of her husband's friend, as if Drake had not sent her that mad letter a few days since, in which his love had broken the bonds of his calculating discretion for the first and only time. His note was in no way acknowledged, neither was it reproved. To-night, her manner convinced Drake that he must win.

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"Let us go to the library," said Wroxeter, rising.

"But surely an intruder—at this reunion—" protested Drake.

"Not a bit of it!" Wroxeter slipped one brown hand within Drake's elbow, and laid the other on his wife's exquisite shoulder. "The library, by all means."

The room had once been a studio; two years ago, it was full of left-over artists' trappery when Wroxeter brought to the house the wife whom he had taken, in his middle-age, from the Canadian convent school. Here, among the pictures, Drake had met her—herself, he thought, the very picture of a growing flower.

Wroxeter turned out the gay canvases, and made the cavernous apartment as somber as a vault. Dusky tapestries shrouded the walls, and throttled the windows. Among them peered the mounted heads of monstrous beasts; a hideous idol brooded malevolently in one corner; in another grinned the effigy of an ancient Chinese executioner in his red-and-yellow armor. Ranged above the low bookcases, gleamed the celebrated Wroxeter fighting knives. The collection was reputed priceless—poniard, creese and yataghan, assagai and dirk, bowie, claymore and machete. The single green-shaded lamp glimmered on an enormous table, littered with charts and documents. In front of the blinking coals in the grate, a divan was covered with lustrous bearskin. Drake sat beside Madelon; Wroxeter leaned idly against the repulsive figure-head of an African war-canoe, flanking the fireplace.

To Drake, the sight of the girl's tender beauty in this room was always a fantasy of the incongruous. And typical of her incongruous marriage? The comparison occurred to Drake's mind as he bent forward and warmed his hands thoughtfully over Wroxeter's hearthstone.

In the meantime, Madelon had insisted that David must be made to tell of all his wanderings. Wroxeter was a graceless talker, with neither humor nor imagination. When there was a logical halt in the narrative, Drake rose to go.

"Incidentally, my pet collection has been favored." The traveler indicated an oblong packet on the table. "There is a rarity, I believe, sent me by a border chieftain in Aksu. I haven't opened it yet."

Drake remained while Wroxeter unwound the wrappings, pungent with the mysterious aroma of the Orient. A broad dagger was disclosed. The blade was clouded with a gossamer device of curling dragons, and the heavy hilt was carved ivory, yellowed by age. Madelon touched the metal with a venturesome finger.

"What is it called?" she asked.

Wroxeter caressed the hilt in his palm. "The name can't be translated politely," he said. "'Love knife,' perhaps, will serve."

"Love knife?" repeated Madelon, wide-eyed.

"Yes. They come usually in pairs, like dueling pistols. One you give to your adversary, and with the other——"

"An affectionate title for such a weapon," said Drake, preparing to roll a cigarette. "'Love' seems hardly appropriate."

"Why not? In Turkestan, the duello is rare, except when two men love the same woman. A satisfactory blow, like this——"

Drake looked up from the trembling cigarette-paper. The dagger was on the floor, and Wroxeter, smiling uncertainly, was gripping the ball of his thumb with his other hand.

"I'm in the line of accidents this evening," he said; "scratched myself again, somehow."

"On this, David?" Madelon picked up the knife, and carried it to the lamp. "Oh, the villainy!" she gasped.

The men crossed to the table where she had dropped the weapon. From the upper end of the hilt now protruded a needle, less than an inch long, bluish in tint. With a smothered oath, the explorer retreated into the shadow.

"What's that point there?" blurted

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Drake, breathlessly. "What is it?—that point. Not the—the——?"

"The blue Kashgar thorn. Damnation, yes!"

His wife and his friend sought Wroxeter's countenance, inscrutable in the darkness. For an instant, the three were statues. The fall of pallor on Madelon's cheeks was like snow on roses. "*Ciel!* it frightens me!" she murmured.

"Don't be concerned, child," said Wroxeter, but with the faintest quiver of an alarm. "To draw out any poison there, is simple." And he put the hand to his mouth.

Drake caught his forearm. "Remember the broken wine-glass—the skin is cut."

"By God! that's so! Thank you, Ellis." Wroxeter's mechanical laugh grated, and he took a fresh grip on his wrist. "The devil is in the mess. I wonder—well, I must ask your help, my friend." He laughed again, more softly than before.

In Drake's fingers, the futile tissue-paper still fluttered, as he folded and refolded it, corner to corner. Wroxeter wrinkled his forehead, perplexed.

"I must ask your help, Ellis," he echoed.

"My part is to help—mine!" cried Madelon, springing forward.

"We cannot well allow you to risk it, can we, Drake? Come, make haste!"

Drake tried hard to reason; his brain simmered, uncontrollably. He moistened his dry lips, and shifted his gaze to the leering image in the corner, missing the dawn of horror and amazement on the white face of Madelon.

"We must send for a doctor," said Drake, thickly, as if to the idol. "Of course, there is no danger, David. This is New York—not an Asian desert."

"Ah, yes," rejoined Wroxeter, in a voice of silk. "A stray savage in the desert would suck this wound, unless——"

Drake made a vague gesture of protest.

"Unless," pursued the other, "he wished to make a widow. Madelon, I beg—" for his wife was on her knees, fighting her sobs bravely, reaching for his hand. Wroxeter held it aloft.

"Your admirable caution suggests a doctor, Drake," said he. "Averill is clever, and close by. If you will be so kind."

"I don't want you to think I—" stammered Drake. "I want you to know——"

"I do. Time presses."

Moving stiffly, after the fashion of an automaton, the younger man hurried to the telephone in the hall. Averill promised speed, and Drake clicked the receiver to its place, turning slowly on his heel. His glance fell on the closed door of the library, and hung there, singularly fascinated. From minute to minute, the grim, black panels became potential, tragic, terrible. He fumbled at the knob, and reeled once, drunkenly. Watching the sinister door, he sidled to the stair-head, and called for Mifflin. There was no response, but the sound of his own speech nerved him; he reëntered the library. Wroxeter stood on the hearth-rug with arms folded, facing the entrance.

"You did not hurry, Ellis," he complained.

Drake leaned heavily against the table. Wroxeter broke into a queer chuckle, and darted to the lamp, thrusting his hand under its rays.

"Behold!" he said. "I find that I have not been injured. Do you see? I made a mistake. The thorn didn't bite me in the least. Do you see? Eh?"

"You are not hurt? You are not—?" Drake straightened himself, and brought his fist down on the desk. "Then, what was all this precious nonsense?" he demanded, sullenly; "a joke?" He pulled up his shoulders. "Your humor is delicate."

"Well, that is as it may be," retorted Wroxeter. "My humor is my own. So, if you will allow the conceit, is my wife. Madelon!"

She advanced out of the gloom into the ring of light. Drake could not meet her blazing eyes.

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"You have the base and evil heart of a coward," said she.

"A coward!" Drake's shrill voice belied his defiant swagger. "Oh, you mean David's tomfoolery with the dagger? Have you only now seen the trick? Somewhat stupid and crude, but——"

"I mean that—and this." She flung a letter at his feet.

"Well, there it is for you, Ellis Drake," Wroxeter drawled. "Mifflin intercepted the sweet composition, and gave it to me unopened. He is a faithful soul, with some knowledge of men and women. I have just read the letter to Madelon. She and I know you now for the first time. The little episode of my prearranged poison was an effective prelude to our knowledge, as the event proves. And what do you say?"

"I say that you chose to insult me in your own house," Drake snarled.

"That is soon remedied," laughed Wroxeter, drily. "I hear the bell of the street door. It is Averill, I dare say, who possibly will be glad to drive you home. Before we terminate our acquaintance, Drake, do me this last service—pray make my apologies to the doctor. Shall I ring for my butler to escort you to the carriage? No? Perhaps you are right. You have been always considerate, my dear friend."

CHANSON BRETONNE

JE NAQUIS, je vécus sur la lande bretonne,
Où la mer m'envoyait sa plainte monotone.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenir des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

J'aimais les vieux rochers, les mouettes, la grève,
L'Océan qui mugit aux falaises sans trêve.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenir des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

Je filais, je chantais un air joyeux ou triste;
Je dansais au biniou à l'âge où rien n'attriste.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenir des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

Un jour de mes pensers je rencontrai l'idole;
L'idole était d'argile et son cœur sans parole.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenirs des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

J'allai dans la nuit sombre, errante et délaissée,
Et mon âme mourut de s'être ainsi trompée.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenir des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

DUCHESSE DE ROHAN.

DON'T borrow trouble; if it comes, you'll own it.

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THE DAY FAIRFAX RETURNED

By Robert C. V. Meyers

WHEN Fairfax went aboard ship for the homeward passage, he would have said that he was entirely cured of the nonsense which had sent him from his native soil a year and a half before. The second day at sea, he began to think of America and the changes he might expect to find there. The third day, he thought of Henrietta Dale. It was she who had sent him abroad. He would have said that she was cruel and heartless; that his affection for her had been mere calf-love, begun on the athletic field where he had done marvels as a half-back, to whom she had thrown a bunch of violets worn close to her heart a few minutes before. Several other girls had thrown their violets at his feet, but only Henrietta's appealed to him.

After the violets came the introduction through Emily Baily, Cousin Jack's wife. Then came the friendship, and at last the avowal which she repulsed. After that, he left college and the country, and now, a year and a half later, he was going back to enter upon a strenuous life of business with his father, thankful that he had not gone in for law, as he had thought to do before he had been so badly treated by a heartless woman.

Pshaw! why should he think of her? It must be because of the possibility of meeting her soon again. No, he would think only of his father, who had agreed to the long absence without asking for a single word of explanation. As for that, though, his father must have known everything, for Emily Baily was the intimate of Henrietta Dale, and called his father her "confessor," to whom she told all her woes. At any rate, the *pater* had been kind, and even now did not insist on his son's return, only intimating that he considered twenty-four a very fitting age for a young man to enter upon the affairs of the world. Yes, he would go home, and do wonders in business; he was tired of trapesing about; he was tired of nonsense; now he would go in and win his spurs.

The fourth day out, there was a big storm, a heavy sea was shipped, and a sailor tangled in the cordage was swept away. Fairfax plunged into the raging waters. It was a long time before those on deck saw him rise on the crest of a wave, nearly exhausted, the unconscious sailor on one arm. They dragged the two up. Fairfax heard the crew and passengers cheering, and thought they complimented him on his ability as a swimmer; he did not think their praise could be for any heroism on his part.

When the ship entered calm waters, and the pilot came aboard, Fairfax frowned when the rescued sailor was mentioned to him; he had had a surfeit of the thing from the passengers. The first familiar face he saw, as he went down the gang-plank to *terra firma*, was that of his father.

"So," said the elder man, "you have been going about saving people's lives? A reporter has just told me."

Fairfax laughed and shook his father by the hand, and they went along in the cab toward the old home. At the door of the house, his father left and took his way down-town.

Fairfax entered the house, and went up to his room. Nothing was changed;

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everything was as he had left it when he went away. Had his mother been alive, this might have been expected, but for a man of his father's busy habits so to care for his boy's fripperies of furbishings appealed strongly to the young fellow. What a good father his was, and how he had neglected him—first, in the college days when his classmates took up every minute of time, and afterward by this year and a half of absence. But, now, he would do all he could to make up for his long period of neglect.

He sauntered up to the mantelpiece. Above a framed photograph of himself, in all the shapeless toggery of the football field, was a brown mass of what had once been a bunch of violets, still tied with a scarlet ribbon.

He had neglected to destroy them when he had gone abroad. He flushed as he tore them down and tossed them into a waste-paper basket. A maid in attending to the room would burn the trash.

He looked at his watch, and found that it was but three o'clock. The rules of the house seldom varied, so he would not see his father until the seven-o'clock dinner.

Somehow, he did not feel like going out; his room had a strange fascination for him after his long experience with foreign hotels. He settled himself in the soft, padded arm-chair, and spread his feet toward the fireless grate. To-morrow, he would begin work. What a fool he had been to absent himself so long from the interests of his native land, letting other fellows gain such enviable places in the race for success! However, had he not been forced away by his disappointment, he might now be plodding over law books, preparatory to entering a field for which he had no calling, and eventually becoming a second- or third-rate attorney for the rest of his life. No; activity was the thing—business activity; his many months of loitering made him see things as they should be seen.

Again, he pulled out his watch. Only half-past three! He would go for a stroll, and call on Jack Baily. Jack had been a good fellow in the old time; he had heard, through his wife, all about the trouble over Henrietta Dale, and never said a word. But Jack, bulling and bearing the market, would be busy, and ought not to be interrupted by merely a social visit.

He wondered if Emily were well, and Toodlems, the youngest child, who had always been convulsively cutting teeth. Then, he remembered how angry Emily had been over Henrietta's treatment of him; how she had sent for him to come to her pretty apartment; had taken his hand in hers, and said, "Don't mind more than you can help, Billy. Henrietta has behaved hatefully. It is all her advanced and unsentimental ideas, thinking that men should be of account in the world." Every word had been a stab; but Emily had meant well, and it had been she who presented him to Henrietta. Henrietta! He was thinking of her again, and all this time his eyes had been on the waste-paper basket where were the ruined violets of long ago! Bah! Henrietta Dale was nothing to him—absolutely nothing.

A clock somewhere in the house struck four. He would go and see Jack.

When he reached the office, his cousin waved a welcoming hand toward him—holding an important conversation over the telephone with a railway magnate, at the same time.

"Glad to see you, old man!" said Jack. "Yes," to the telephone, "jump two points to-morrow. Between boards? All right; certainly. Well, old man, I'm simply delighted. Yes, I said two points. Certainly, I will, if you say so. Seventy, not eighty, only two points."

"Perhaps I'd better drop in another time," said Fairfax. "I only wanted to ask after Emily."

"All right," responded Jack, his ear still glued to the receiver. "And the kid, too. He's done cutting teeth. Now, it's measles. Don't hurry because—yes, yes, or a point and a half if——"

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"I fear you're busy," ventured Fairfax.

"Not at all," returned Baily. "I—eighty, and not a stroke more. Going, old man? I'll tell Emily. Come to dinner to-night. Seven o'clock."

"Can't," Fairfax replied, shortly. "It's my first night home. I shall dine with my father." But he doubted if Jack heard him. He left the office, feeling hurt. The world was terribly selfish; he wanted no more of it just then. He hastened home in the early dusk.

A half-hour later Jack Baily went down to the automobile in which his wife had called for him, and dismissed the chauffeur, for he dearly loved to make himself a part of the new centaur. He told her of Fairfax's call and the invitation to dinner.

"I hope he'll come," she said; "I'd like to tell him how Henrietta has gone off in looks."

"Has she?" Baily asked.

"You know she is not nearly so cheerful as she used to be," his wife returned. "And, if a woman who is not absolutely a howling beauty is not cheerful, she goes off in looks. Look out! You frightened that horse with your steam whistle. Of course, you told him we are at the hotel?"

"Very likely," he answered, moderating his whistle to the susceptibilities of a woman crossing the street. "At any rate, his father will tell him. Emily, old Rocks, the president of the H. R. R., is in the new deal, and wants to raise two points——"

"Jack," she interrupted, "I got the loveliest white-velvet coat for Toodlems you ever saw."

At the same moment, Fairfax was in his room, his eyes on the dark grate. It seemed pretty hard to him, this coming home—his father too busy to do more than shake hands with him, his cousin too busy even to shake hands. What a busy world it was! He seemed the only idler.

He wondered where were all his college chums. Most of them had been graduated in June of last year, and were scattered, very likely forgetting him. And he the favorite half-back of the year! He wondered if he could play a game now—so many changes creep into the rules of the game each year. But what sport it used to be—especially that Thanksgiving game, when the girls threw their flowers to him! How beautiful Henrietta had looked that day! After he knew her, how lovely she— But that was over, well over, and her rejection of his suit had made him see things in their true light. Yet, he wondered who her cavaliers were now.

He rose and walked about the room. He caught sight of the waste-paper basket, the faded violets in it. He gave it a savage kick, and it rolled partly under the bed. He cared absolutely nothing for Henrietta Dale, yet this coming home brought everything before him.

Just then, a knock sounded on the door. Of course, it must be his father, coming home early in order to talk with him. Instead, it was the butler; his father wished to speak to him over the telephone.

Fairfax went down to the library, and heard that his father must attend an improvised board meeting, and would not be home until ten o'clock. Fairfax picked up a book, but he could not read. A pretty home-coming, indeed! Stay here and dine alone? Never! He would accept Jack Baily's invitation, and let Emily see that he had got over all that nonsense of long ago. Why had he not thought of that before? Naturally, she must have asked Jack how he looked, and if his eyes were "sad."

He hurried into his evening coat. As he was leaving the room, something touched his foot. In dressing, he had angrily tramped around the floor, and set the discarded round waste-paper basket in motion, for it had rolled from under the bed, emptying out the bunch of dead violets.

He grasped the faded blossoms in a veritable fury, and crushed them in his coat-pocket, determining to toss them in the cartway outside.

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He had to make haste to catch his car. All the way to Jack's, he was at white heat. When he reached the apartment, he called himself to order. Emily must not see him like this—he must be cool and calm.

When he felt that he was equal to it, he entered the yawning portal of the huge, brown palace. The elevator took him heavenward. When he stepped out, he steered for a door where stood a white-gloved servant. Beyond, he caught a glimpse of several people. So, Emily was having a dinner-party! He would have gone away, but he feared the servant might report his having been there, and Emily would comment. He handed the man his hat and top-coat, and plunged into the room, with a smiling visage. Then, he came to a standstill, for the first person he saw was Henrietta Dale. She was talking to another woman, but her eyes caught his, and the next moment she had turned to her companion. Then, a voice sounded in his ear:

"How good of you, Mr. Fairfax. We have read all about you in this evening's paper, and how you saved that sailor from drowning. How good of you to come to us thus informally." It was Henrietta's mother.

Fairfax gave his hand, mechanically.

"Henrietta!" said Mrs. Dale, and the girl came up.

"Welcome home!" she said, in a constrained voice. "We have heard of nothing but your saving the sailor, since the evening papers came out. Will you take in Mrs. Enderly?"

Fairfax was dumfounded; he was in his cousin's home, and yet neither Jack nor Emily was to be seen, while a dinner-party was on.

But he had no time to do other than offer his arm to Mrs. Enderly, and join the procession that led to the dining-room. Seated at the table, his bewilderment increased. He was in Jack Baily's dining-room, he recognized the furnishings, and yet he was an uninvited guest at a dinner given by the mother of Henrietta Dale, the girl who had discarded him, whose rejection had sent him from his home a year and a half ago.

Mrs. Enderly spoke to him. "We have read about your saving the sailor," she said; "it was wonderfully brave of you."

"I must introduce myself, Mr. Fairfax," a man said, across the table. "It seems your saving the sailor has been the talk of the club since the papers came out."

Fairfax wished he had been drowned in saving that sailor!

"And your cousin, Emily Baily"—Mrs. Enderly interrupted his agony—"have you seen her?"

"No," he answered.

"She will not be here," the lady pursued. "She hardly felt equal to it; Toodlems was so on her mind. Fancy a woman renting this lovely apartment, and going to live in a hotel, simply that she might devote herself to a baby with a temper, for Toodlems is the crossest little monkey I ever came across."

The truth dawned on him. Emily had rented her apartment to the Dales, and he stood in the light of an interloper. What must Henrietta be thinking? But he had to talk, and he had to eat, and he had to endure the torture of sitting there, the involuntary guest of the woman who had rejected him.

He did not look in her direction; he did not wish to see the scornful expression of her eyes; he only waited for the dinner to come to an end, when he might get away and—do what?—return to Europe at once?

He sat thus an hour and more. Then, Mrs. Dale arose. But, when the ladies had passed from the room, Fairfax made his way into the hall, where he encountered Henrietta. The others had passed into the drawing-room. The girl's eyes met his own.

"Henrietta, I thought Jack lived here."

He had not meant to utter her name; but he came upon her so unexpectedly, she looked so sweet, even helpless, as she turned her misty eyes to him!

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"You forgive me," she said. "Your coming here tells me as much. I think we shall be good friends again. It was so brave of you to come. People have criticized me for—for that time, and your coming disarms their criticism. I—that time, I might have been kinder, but you seemed to me to be frittering your best days away. Emily Baily told me you were coming back to go into business with your father, and I am glad, for your sake. And your bravery in saving that sailor! Mr. Fairfax"—she held out her hand—"I am glad that I did as I did, for I have discovered that you are a brave man, indeed, in staying through the dinner which you must have attended by mistake, for in this way you have shielded me from my friends. And I thank you for your friendship."

Perhaps, his heart beat tumultuously, for he put his hand up over his coat-pocket. There, he felt a lump of something. He took out the faded, crushed violets.

"I meant to destroy these," he said; "I believe I could not." She gave a little cry as she saw the flowers tied with the scarlet ribbon.

She took his hand. Tears were in her eyes. "You kept them?" she asked.

"I—I'm glad Jack *doesn't* live here!" he said, his cup of joy brimming over. "Henrietta!"

And she leaned toward him.

AN ANCIENT TRUTH

OLD Crœsus has a lowering brow,
A mouth of wide dimension,
A brain where one may seek in vain
For gleams of comprehension.

Yet, when you hear of him each night
With fond mamas a-dining,
You realize how much a cloud
May owe its silver lining!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.

THE OLD CODGER'S INHUMANITY

THE Old Codger's rheumatism had kept him penned up in the house for several weary days, and he was in a state of hectic savagery when poor, paltry Neighbor Akinside—who was a prey to dyspepsia, and a still worse disease, the belief that everybody else was interested in his ailment—crept meekly in.

The visitor inquired after the old gentleman's health, and the veteran was in duty bound to return the compliment by asking about the other's malady. Having thus had the trigger of his loquacity properly pulled, Neighbor Akinside recited, with chastened relish and loving lingering over the details, how he had acquired his ailment, what torments he had suffered from it, what various sympathetic Toms, Dicks and Harrys had said about it, how Dr. Thus-and-so and old Dr. What's-his-name had diagnosed it, what various physicians, friends, enemies, chance acquaintances, and so-forths had prescribed for it, how little

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good all such prescriptions had done him, and so on, with the solemn persistence of a Winter rain falling on an orphan girl's grave.

"About a year ago," he proceeded, with keen, but apologetic, enjoyment, "I met a gentleman who was afflicted almost exactly as I am. No matter how careful he was about eating he always suffered excruciating agony afterward. None of the remedies he tried gave him more than the merest temporary relief, and, when I saw him, he was indeed in a pitiable condition. We both enjoyed the meeting very much, and were greatly edified by each other's conversation. My stomach——"

"Mr. Akinside," broke in the Old Codger, with ill-suppressed fury, "I am a patient man, and all such stuff, but I say, in tones of thunder, *confound your stomach!* Great day in the morning, man! Do you flatter yourself that you are the only person on earth who was ever cursed with a stomach? You make more fuss about that one stomach of yours than a camel does about all seven of his, or the late What's-his-name, the martyr, did over being burnt at the stake! Judging by the hooraw you put up about it, one would think that——"

"Wh-wh-why, you are insulting, sir!" spluttered the visitor, in indignant surprise. "I——"

"Yes; and you are worse than heathenish!" roared the Old Codger, thumping on the floor with his staff. "The idolator, clad only in pagan darkness and a clout, does homage to images of wood and stone; but you, dressed in the robe of enlightened Christianity, fall down and worship your own stomach! You think you suffer as nobody else ever suffered. You overestimate the importance of your own ache. The prime cause of your trouble is laziness——"

"Sir-r-r!"

"Laziness, is what I said! That's what's the matter with you, Akinside! Grab a buck-saw, and fiddle it vigorously across the face of the woodpile for a few weeks, and you'll forget you ever had a stomach. Dyspepsia is more of a fad than it is anything else, and nobody but lazy people have time to indulge in fads. And, even if your ache does pain you a trifle, occasionally, always remember that there are plenty of better people who are a great deal worse off than you are, and be thankful for that. Your own pain is purely a personal matter with you, so keep it to yourself; or, if you must tell it, hire a hall, pose as an awful example, and charge admission. Don't go whining around——"

But the unappreciated Akinside had jumped up and bolted out in great wrath, and with surprising agility for an invalid.

"Ar-r-r-r-!" snarled the old man, after the last echo of the visitor's footfalls had died away. "He makes me weary, moaning about his infernal dyspepsia! Now, if it was rheumatism, it would be an entirely different matter!"

TOM P. MORGAN.

THE LADY—I hope you earned this reward-of-merit card, my lad.

THE LAD—Yer bet I did, ma'am. When I was takin' it away frum de good guy dat had it, t'ree of his frien's pitched inter me, an' I had ter lick de whole bunch.

CLARA—I have just heard of an awful scandal.

MAUD—Oh, what is it?

"I can't tell you now. I'm saving it for the church sociable."

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